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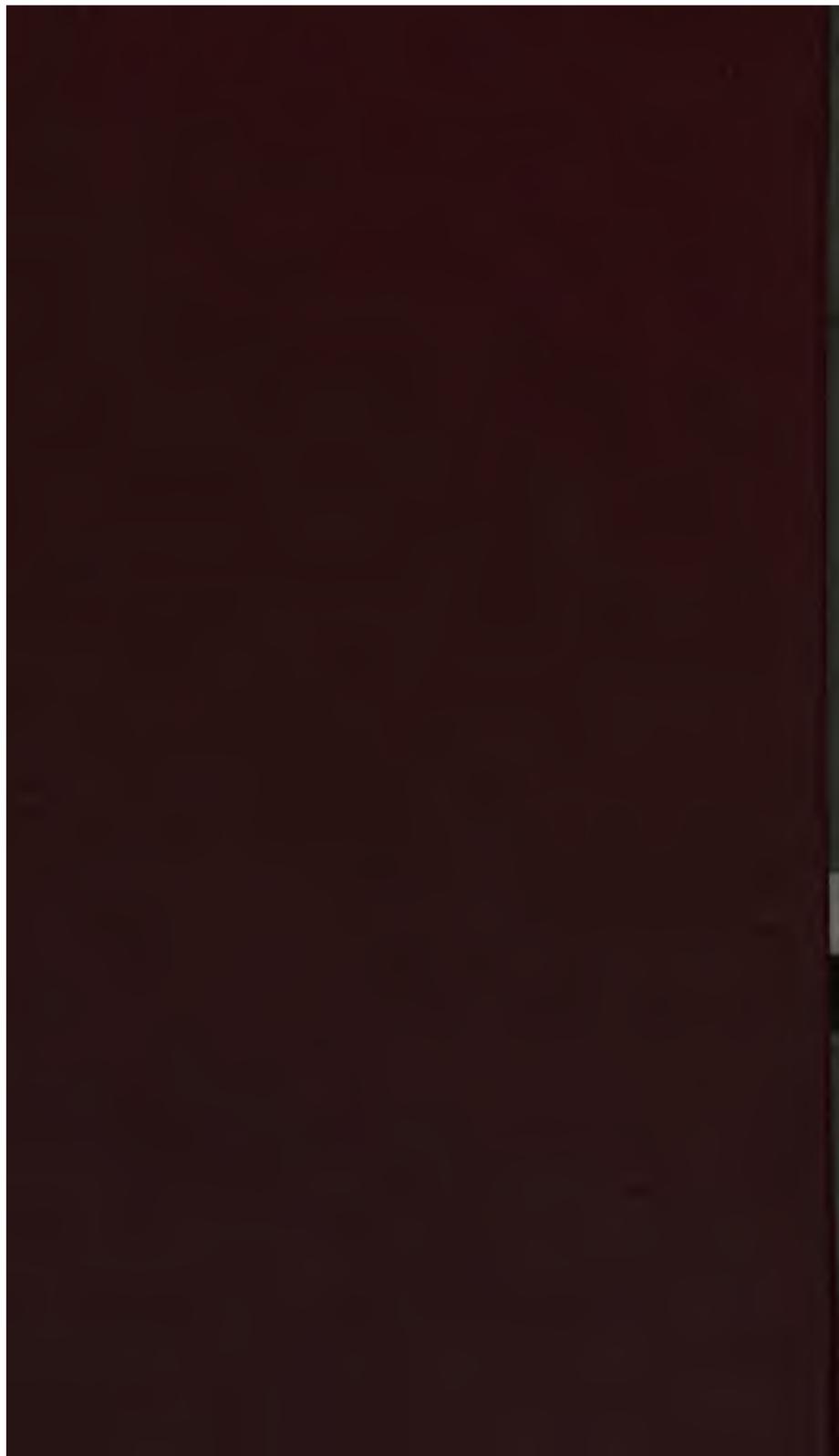
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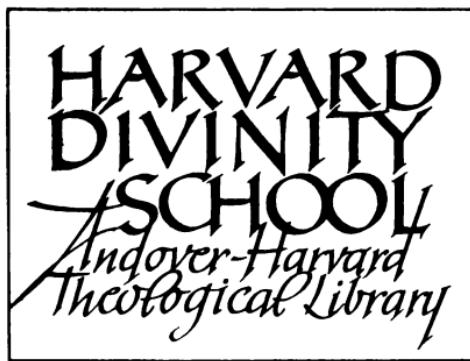
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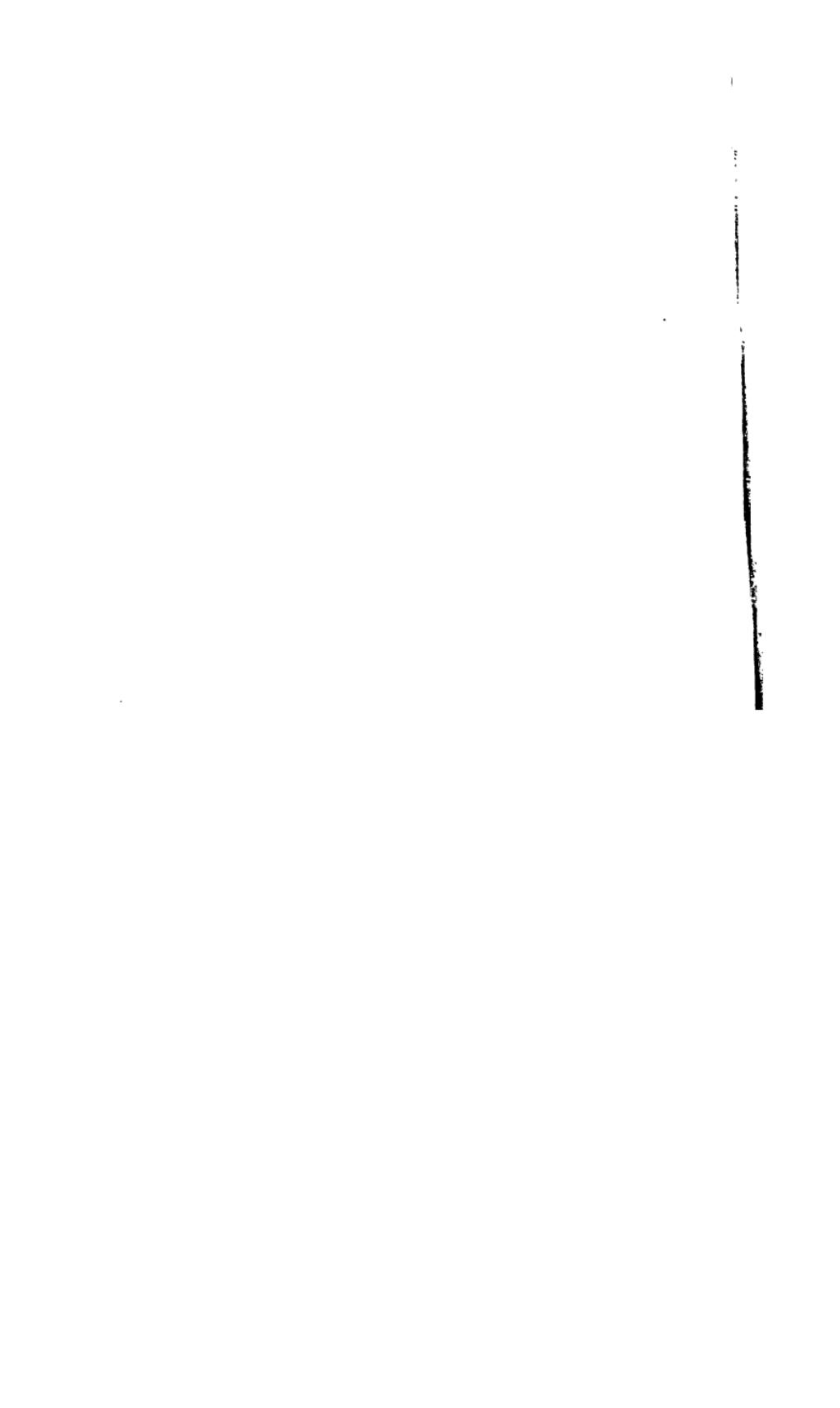
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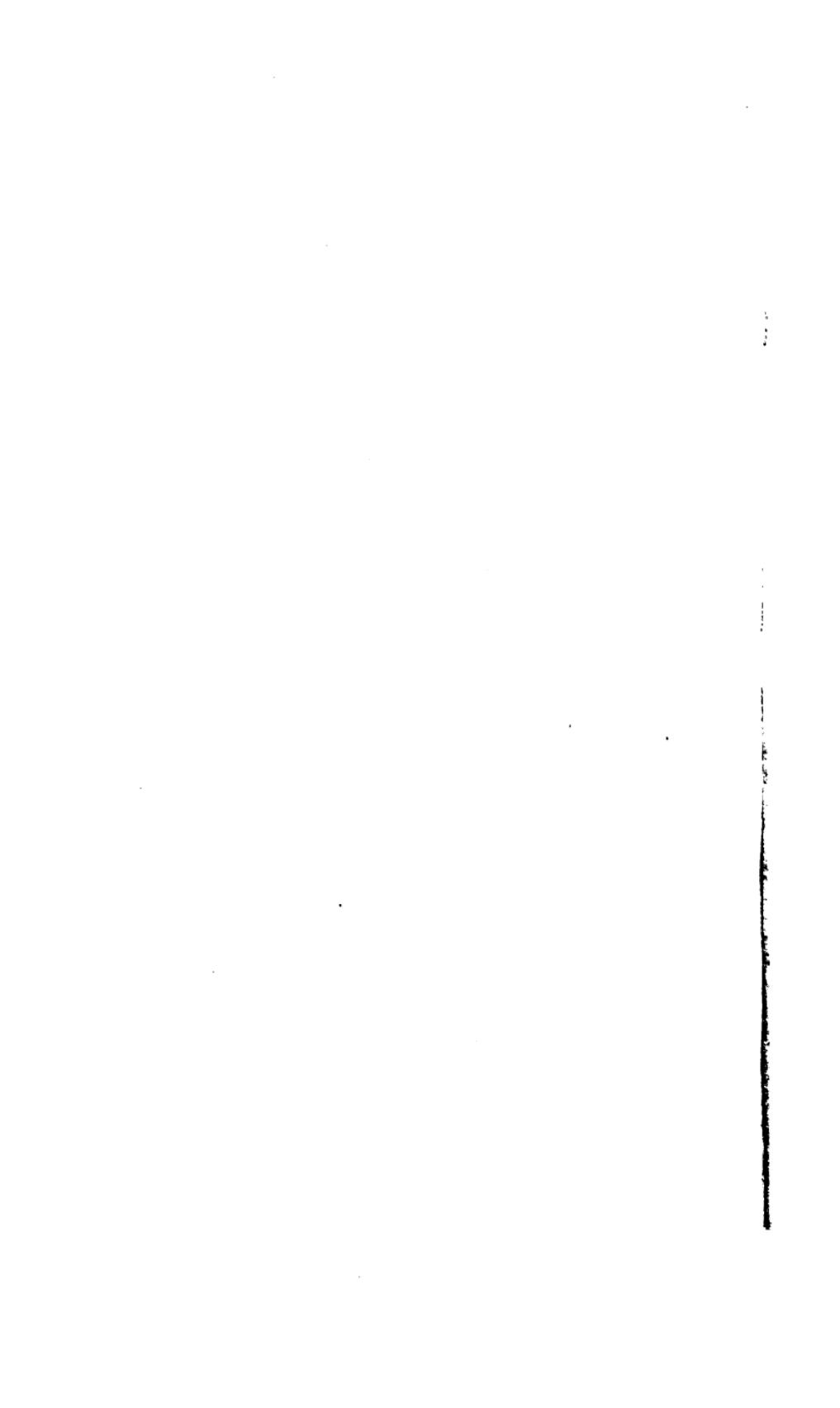
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THE ASCENSION.

DOCTRINAL AND PRACTICAL.

FIFTEEN SERMONS

TOGETHER

WITH AS MANY PRAYERS

FROM

SEVEN UNIVERSALIST CLERGYMEN,

OF MAINE.

REV. C. W. QUINBY, EDITOR.

"In the multitude of Counsellors there is Safety."—Solomon.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life."—Christ.

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."—Christ.

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PREFACE.

UNIVERSALISM is doing a great, and an excellent work in the moral and christian world. It is demolishing the old structures of christian and heathen cruelty: and overthrowing the monstrous errors of human creeds. It is reconciling the revealed character of God with itself, and with His dealings towards His intelligent offspring. It is fast stripping the christian religion of those fearful mantles of gloom and terror, which, for centuries, have filled the soul with sorrow and mourning; and imparting a beauty and glory to its lovely form, which is calculated to arrest the attention and secure the affections of every benevolent mind. It is boldly vindicating the universal love and paternity of God, and the common brotherhood of man. Silently, but surely, is it advancing the cause of the slave — facilitating the overthrow of intemperance — hastening the day of universal peace — demolishing the gallows — opening the door of the prison house — unloosing every yoke and setting the captive free. In short, its foundation principle is LOVE; and this principle lies at the very bases of ALL the great moral and benevolent enterprises of the day. And shall we not *work* and work *constantly* for the more universal dissemination of the sentiments which we advocate? Can we do too much for the cause of Christ? Shall we not study for opportunities of bringing the claims of this Religion before

the mind of the community, and recommending its blessed teachings to the affections of the heart?

We have been induced, principally by these considerations, to take measures for the publication of this volume of *Sermons and Prayers*. Its productions are from the pens of those whom we regard with sentiments of confidence and esteem. Many of whom have long "fought the good fight of faith,"—and manfully stood up to the contest against the opposing hosts, in our State. And for this reason, if for no other, it must be a source of satisfaction to the real friends of the cause of God's impartial goodness, in this portion of the divine heritage to peruse their writings, and recommend them to the attention of their friends and neighbors. The Sermons which compose this volume, are all on important and interesting doctrinal and practical subjects; and are calculated to strengthen the hope and increase the faith of the reader. Many of them are marked with patient reflection, deep penetration, and an extensive knowledge of the Sacred Word; and we are not without hope that they will be the means of enlightening the darkness of some mind, and causing the soul to rejoice with a joy unspeakable, by embracing "the truth as it is in Jesus," and bowing before the mild sceptre of "the Lord of life."

One consideration more. Many of our societies are so small as to be unable to sustain constant preaching. Under these circumstances, and also when societies are entirely destitute of the preached word, it becomes desirable that this want should be at least, partially supplied by *reading* a sermon, and uniting in other devotional exercises. This volume is well calculated for use on such occasions — being of large print, and containing profitable sermons, and also Prayers, which may be either read, or committed to memory and repeated.

GEO. W. QUINBY,
S. H. COLESWORTHY.

CONTENTS.

SERMON I.

	PAGE
Experience and Doctrine: By Rev. George Bates, Turner. "And were by nature the children of wrath even as others." Ephesians ii, 3.	13

SERMON II.

The Christian Principle: By Rev. Calvin Gardner, Waterville. "And the king of Israel said unto Elisha when he saw them 'My father, shall I smite them? shall I smite them?'" II Kings, vi, 21.	38
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

SERMON III.

Man's free volition and God's supreme government: By Rev. F. A. Hodsdon, Belfast. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life." Genesis xlvi, 5.	57
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

SERMON IV.

A Spiritual Feast: By Rev. N. C. Fletcher, East Thomas-ton. "Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah lv, 1.	83
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----

SERMON V.

Godliness more profitable than bodily exercise: By Rev. L. P. Rand, Orono. "For bodily exercise profiteth little; but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." I Tim. iv, 8. 100

SERMON VI.

The Religion of Christ a Treasure: By Rev. N. Gunnison, Hallowell. "Again: the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Matt. xiii, 44. 123

SERMON VII.

Subjection to the divine government: By Rev. J. P. Atkinson, Westbrook. "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection to the Father of spirits, and live?" Heb. xii, 9. 141

SERMON VIII.

The Power of Example: By Rev. G. K. Shaw, Dixfield. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your father which is in heaven." Matt. v, 16. 164

SERMON IX.

A Reason for my Hope: By Rev. S. Stetson, Brunswick. "Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." I Peter iii, 15. 188

SERMON X.

Progressive Glory and Happiness: By Rev. T. J. Tenney, Norway. "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." II Cor. iii, 18. 211

SERMON XI.

The subjection of all things to Christ and God: By Rev. G. Bailey, Brunswick. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." I Cor. xv, 28. 228

SERMON XII.

The sympathy of Christ an example and a consolation to humanity: By Rev. L. L. Sadler, Portland. "Jesus wept." John xi, 35. 247

SERMON XIII.

The True Light: By D. T. Stevens, New Gloucester. "The true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world." John i, 9. 272

SERMON XIV.

The Life after Death: By Rev. W. A. Drew, Augusta. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush, when he calleth the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living: for all live unto him." Luke xx, 37, 38. 301

SERMON XV.

The benevolence of Christianity, defended in a scriptural Exposition: By Rev. G. W. Quinby, Saco. "I, also, will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh." Proverbs i, 26. 320

PRAYERS.

	PAGE.
PRAYER by REV. GEO. BATES	34
" " REV. CALVIN GARDNER	54
" " REV. F. A. HODSDON	80
" " REV. N. C. FLETCHER	98
" " REV. L. P. RAND	118
" " REV. N. GUNNISON	138
" " REV. J. P. ATKINSON	161
" " REV. G. K. SHAW	185
" " REV. S. STETSON	207
" " REV. T. J. TENNEY	226
" " REV. G. BAILEY	245
" " REV. L. L. SADLER	268
" " REV. W. A. DREW	318
" " REV. G. W. QUINBY	349

SERMON I.

EXPERIENCE AND DOCTRINE.

BY REV. GEORGE BATES, TURNER.

EPHESIANS II: 3.

"AND WERE BY NATURE, THE CHILDREN OF WRATH
EVEN AS OTHERS.

No subject within the wide range of biblical history, or of christian theology, is of deeper importance, or of more thrilling and vital interest to mankind, than that of experimental religion. In this subject, is obviously involved all that pertains to the present enjoyment, and the future hopes and prospects of the pilgrim of earth; all that enters into, and constitutes the essential elements of true piety—all that forms the character, elevates the affections, and disposes the soul for communion with Heaven. It should be considered, also, that experimental religion is an individual, personal matter; that we are not

to look for its moral beauties, its holy influences, its delicious and soul-satisfying fruits, in the mass of professed christians, so much as in the hearts and lives of individual disciples. The subject should be brought home to our own bosoms, and exert its legitimate, its sustaining and sanctifying influences upon our hopes, our tempers, our conduct, in all the relations in which we are placed; that it may accompany us in our trials, shield us from temptations, strengthen our virtue, increase our faith, reconcile us to the dispensations of a just and wise Providence; and, in short, to qualify us for the duties and sufferings of life, and to afford us the blessed prospect of immortal beatitude in the spirit-land.

In considering this subject, with special reference to our individual condition, as "strangers and pilgrims on the earth;" in reflecting upon its direct bearing upon our spiritual interests, as creatures destined to pass away from all earthly scenes, the mind can conceive of nothing, however grand and sublime, that can transcend its value, or be brought into competition with it. The remark is a trite one, yet it is immutable truth, and worthy of frequent reiteration, that *nothing of an earthly character, however splendid*

in appearance, or desirable to the senses, can satisfy the mind of man. No station, however exalted, no pageantry, however gay and fascinating, can ever afford that calm serenity of soul, that quiet and perfect rest to the spirit, for which he often sighs in bitterness and despondency. Religion, daughter of Heaven, pure and purifying, speaks peace to the troubled soul, calms the boisterous waves on the agitated ocean of life, and gives the most perfect rest to its possessor. It smoothes the uneven and often rugged pathway of life, begets in the mind a firm trust in the infinite wisdom and rectitude of the Divine government, and draws out the affections of the human heart to God, as to the Giver of all good, and the portion of the soul forever.

Experimental religion should be regarded, not merely as intellectual in its character, and therefore attainable by the learned only; it should rather be considered as adapted to the capacity, and within the reach of all, without distinction of nation, color, caste, or grade; equally meeting and satisfying the spiritual wants of the humblest cottager, and him who stands highest on the roll of fame. It is equally adapted to the monarch seated upon his throne, and the lowliest peasant in

his dominions. As taught and exemplified by Jesus and his Apostles, the poor, the needy, the ignorant and those who were out of the way, were objects of its heavenly solicitude, and sharers in its mighty and life-giving energies. It is indeed, a religion for *the people* ; for the WORLD. And as this is a subject in which no particular sect, or party is exclusively interested, but which commends itself equally to all, we should endeavor, as sincere and candid inquirers after truth, to obtain a clear understanding of it. We should not suffer ourselves to be blinded in regard to its true character, by considering experimental religion as an inexplicable mystery, which we cannot fathom, and of the operations of which, upon ourselves, we can give no satisfactory or intelligible account. We have great reason to fear that many who have entertained this view, have thrown around the whole subject such a drapery of mysticism, that thousands have been perplexed and bewildered in their anxious researches after “the one thing needful.” The labors of this class of divines, have, as we verily believe, had a direct tendency to “darken counsel by words without knowledge.”

Neither should we be led astray by exhor-

tations to surrender the reason which God has given us for wise and noble purposes, in our investigations upon this subject. No, beloved reader ; experimental religion is perfectly compatible with the free and untrammelled exercise of reason and sound philosophy. Nor yet should we too hastily imbibe the sentiment, that before we can have any knowledge of experimental religion, we must undergo a radical, total change of our nature; that some new faculties must be given us, differing entirely from those with which the Creator originally endowed us.

The doctrine of a radical, supernatural change of man's nature, in our opinion, receives no support from the Scriptures, when rightly interpreted ; and not only so, but we believe it operates as a direct and powerful hindrance to many, by "shutting up the kingdom of heaven" against them. It undoubtedly originated in the doctrine of innate, total depravity. If, therefore, it be shown that the latter is not taught in the Scriptures of truth, it follows then, that the former is not to be relied on. They must stand or fall together. And with a view to present this subject in all its proper light, and to exhibit the true doctrine of revelation, as a foundation

on which the whole superstructure of religion is reared, we will here introduce the text : “And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.”

It may not be improper to observe in this place, that the language of this text, and that of several other passages of similar import, has given rise to much perplexity in many strong, inquiring minds. Owing to a false education, and the power of tradition, aided by the unhappy influence of a disordered imagination, very many have been led to conclude that the inspired writers have given countenance to the monstrous sentiment, that mankind in a “state of nature,” or destitute of a saving knowledge and influence of “grace and truth,” have always been the objects of the unmitigated wrath of an offended Deity! This sentiment has been so widely diffused, and has gained such general credit in the christian community, that it is next to impossible to find an individual who has not at some period of his life, experienced its bitter and withering effects. Under this impression, some have been disqualified for the appropriate duties of life ; the cup of innocent joy has been poisoned, destroying all relish for rational enjoyment and even for social inter-

course. Hence they have led a melancholy and gloomy life upon earth, under the constant apprehension of sufferings indescribable in the immortal world. With regard to others, still, it is to be feared that many become flushed with spiritual pride, by supposing themselves the favored objects of God's love and grace, to the exclusion of others, either by the partiality of the Divine Being, or in consequence of some act or experience of their own. So confident are many, of the truth of this doctrine, that their feelings are seriously injured when it is called in question; and as they fully believe it a doctrine of divine revelation, they deem it presumptuous in us to deny it. We do, however, most conscientiously, and religiously, disbelieve it; and we are exceedingly happy in being able to appeal with perfect confidence to the unerring oracles of truth in confirmation of our views. "To the law and the testimony; if we speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in us."

But we cease to wonder that thousands of our fellow christians should cherish this as a doctrine revealed in the Scriptures, when we reflect that it has cost us much patient and prayerful examination of the sacred writings,

to be entirely divested of its unhappy influence upon our mind. The examination has amply repaid us for all the sacrifices that we have made ; and we confidently assure all who will " go and do likewise," that they will not fail of experiencing the same liberation of mind which we have found.

Let us here, most affectionately query with the reader a moment. When you have read our text, or heard it read, " and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others," have you not considered those of whom the Apostle speaks, as the children of God's WRATH? You answer yes! Ah! here is the grand difficulty with thousands. They make the text speak a language and confirm a sentiment that it does not contain, and concerning which it is entirely silent. Let us query again. Is any mention made in the text, of the wrath of God? Not a word. Then why so understand it? Why be wise above what is written? But, perhaps you will ask, Do we not read of the wrath of God in another part of the Apostle's writings? Answer—we do. In the Epistle to the Romans, 1 chap. 18 v., it is thus written: "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness

of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness." You will observe, that the wrath, here said to be revealed from heaven, whatever is intended by the phrase, was not revealed against *men*; but against *all ungodliness and unrighteousness* of men. And this, instead of indicating any positive wrath, strictly speaking, in the Deity, should be regarded as an indubitable evidence of his faithfulness and paternal love. For as ungodliness and unrighteousness are in their nature and consequences, injurious to the happiness of men, all the opposition of the great Jehovah to those unholy principles, must be regarded as a testimonial of his tender compassion and unchanging affection. There can be no principle nor attribute in the divine nature, incompatible with, or in opposition to, Eternal Love. Whatever, therefore, the wrath of God may signify, it is certain it must harmonize with immutable love. The Apostle evidently refers to the judgments of God which were consequent upon transgression, and this he terms, by way of accommodation, "the wrath of God." But he surely could not intend to convey the idea, that any thing like wrath, in the common acceptation of the term, existed in our heavenly Father; for

this would contradict the testimony of Jesus, that “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life ; for God sent not his Son into the world, to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.” It would also contradict his own testimony, which immediately follows our text : “ But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace are ye saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus ; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus,”

To illustrate this subject, let us suppose a case. A parent has a large family of children, over whom it is proper that he should exercise parental authority. He lives and labors for the good of his family, and he feels towards each individual child, as an affectionate and provident father should feel. He adapts his laws and commands to the capacities of his children, and makes their enjoyment consist in obedience to them. His children depart

from his laws, and disregard his commands. In this case, he finds it necessary to institute a proper discipline, and to subject his children to it. This he does in the same wisdom and goodness which he has ever possessed ; with the same and even an increased affection and regard for these disobedient children. He tells them of the inevitable consequences of a course of wilful disobedience, and solemnly assures them that he shall punish them for every deviation from the rule of life he has laid down. Now, who will undertake to say that this father is unfriendly to his children because he thus punishes them? Or, who will say that he considers them the objects of his wrath? Rather, who does not see that he is opposed to nothing that can promote the happiness of his children, but to that which robs them of their enjoyment and destroys their peace. This, in our opinion, illustrates the subject before us, in a clear and lucid manner. God is the Father and Governor of all intelligences. He is actuated by eternal, unchanging love. He has enacted such laws and put forth such commands, as are not only adapted to the capacity of his offspring, but such as are best calculated to effect and promote their individual and collective hap-

piness. When they depart from his laws, and disobey his commands, he is faithful to visit their iniquities with stripes, and their transgressions with the rod ; and this he will continue until his discipline shall have its designed effect ; until his disobedient children shall be suitably humbled and reformed. Then will they see and feel that the goodness of their heavenly Parent, has never for a single moment, been withdrawn from them.

Let us now come more directly to the text: “ and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.” The Apostle is addressing his brethren who composed the church at Ephesus. He makes particular mention of the great moral change they had experienced through the medium of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and in order to show them the extent of their spiritual blessings, he reminds them of their former condition and character.— “ And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins, wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience ; among whom we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the

flesh and of the mind ;" and then follow the words of the text : "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

The Apostle here tells his brethren that they *were* or *had been*, the children of wrath. When were they such? Plainly before they were "quickened together with Christ." In reference to their condition at that time, he says in the 12th verse: Ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." In this moral condition, then, they were the children of wrath, even as others. We do not understand the Apostle as speaking of the innate, hereditary corruption of human nature, but as referring to those *habits of life* which they had formed while in a state of darkness, unbelief and sin. This construction is evidently required by the Greek text, and this makes it harmonize with the context. But the reader is anxious to know in what sense they were the children of wrath. In answer to this question, which we deem an important one, we prefer taking an indirect method. With this method we trust you will be entirely satisfied when we have finished this labor. Does any one mis-

understand us, when we say of an intemperate person, "he is a child of dissipation, or of intemperance? Would you have any fear of being misunderstood, or misapprehended, were you to use such language in reference to an intemperate person? This is a common mode of speech, many examples of which are found in the Scriptures. Again; suppose you use the phrase in the very verse where our text stands, "children of disobedience," and apply it either to transgressors in general, or to the members of your own family; would you be under any apprehension of being misunderstood? No. If then, a "child of dissipation," signifies a person addicted to intemperate habits, and "children of disobedience" are those who walk in the path of disobedience and transgression, can there be any difficulty in obtaining a correct answer to the question before us, "In what sense were they the children of wrath?" We think not. They were the children of wrath, by harboring and cherishing a spirit of wrath in their hearts, and by exhibiting the fruits of this spirit in their *lives* and *conduct*. A spirit as opposite to that of the Gospel of Jesus, as darkness is to light, was fostered in their hearts, and by this the soft and gentle emo-

tions of sympathy, of kindness and love, were stifled, and the most direful dissents were witnessed in their midst ; while peace and concord, and joy, were driven, not only from their bosoms, but from their homes.

The Gospel of a risen Savior, is not merely a system of moral light and truth, but also of moral purity and holiness. It enjoins purity of heart and life : it demands a perfect conformity to its own celestial image : a renovation, not of the exterior man alone, but of the inmost affections of the soul. When this Gospel exerts its mellowing, transforming influence upon the soul, the spirit of wrath is driven out ; and the babe of BETHLEHEM, the Wisdom of God, the King of Saints, takes his seat upon his legitimate throne. It is then that the peace of the disciple flows like a river.

We are all, dear reader, children of wrath, just in proportion as we suffer a principle of wrath to lurk in our bosoms. The Gospel enjoins upon us, supreme love to God, and entire, undissembled good-will towards all men ; just so far, then, as we come short of this, we are the children of wrath ; and it is in vain that we imagine we are acquainted with the salvation of the Gospel, until we are

saved from this enmity. Love and hatred cannot dwell at the same time in the same bosom. A fountain doth not send forth at the same time, both sweet water and bitter. We cannot serve God and mammon.

But though "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God," and are, in the language of the text, at some period of their lives, "children of wrath," yet we may not despair of a deliverance from this wretched condition; we may hope for salvation; and this hope, founded as it is, upon the purposes of Jehovah, may embrace all our brethren of the human family. As saith the Apostle to the Romans, "Much more, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from *wrath* through him." Bless the Lord for this hope! How soothing its heavenly influence upon the grief-worn parent, in view of the death of a wayward and ungrateful son! How brilliantly it causes the flame of joy to burn in our hearts, in the blissful prospect of meeting a ransomed world in the possession of that eternal life and love which the Son of God came to impart!

This will lead us to speak more particularly of this deliverance or salvation. Concerning the same individuals who "were the children

of wrath, even as others," the Apostle says in the same chapter, " But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who were sometimes *far off*, are made nigh by the blood of Christ." And again: " Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." As one of the principal objects of this discourse is to set the subject of experimental religion in its true light, it may be proper to illustrate this salvation, and to exhibit the process of this deliverance. We will therefore introduce the case of the Apostle Paul himself. That he was a " child of wrath" previous to his conversion to the Christian faith, is abundantly evinced by his own testimony. He possessed, in a high degree, the *spirit of wrath*, which led him to persecute the innocent and devoted followers of the Lamb. When Stephen, the first martyr, was stoned for his faith in the Redeemer, we find Saul, a young man, standing by, *consenting to his death*, and receiving the garments of those who stoned him. He tells us, in so many words, that he was *exceedingly mad*. " And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme, and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange

cities." Must not a religious *mad man* be filled with *wrath*? All history, ancient and modern, teaches us the dangerous character and influence of such persons, especially those in authority. What rivers of human blood have deluged the earth, by an exhibition of this unhallowed spirit of madness and wrath! Yet this same mad persecutor was "saved from wrath," and he was saved by Jesus Christ. He received "the spirit of love and of a sound mind." While on his way to Damascus, with authority and commission from the chief priests, he was met by the same Savior whom he had rejected, and by a light above the brightness of the sun at mid-day, he was stricken to the ground. A voice he then heard, "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks." The first words that he utters in this humble posture, were, "Who art thou Lord?" He is answered, "I am Jesus whom thou persecutest." If we now look into the heart of Saul, shall we find any thing in the likeness of wrath there? Is he any longer a child of wrath? No; it is gone! This demon is cast out by the power of love. God has wrought in him both to will and to do of his good pleasure. In subsequently relating

the particulars of his conversion to the christian religion, the Apostle said, " Wherefore, O King Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision." And the history of this eminent man, is a history of an entire devotion to the cause of Christ, and the best interests of the human race, unparralelled in the annals of the Christian church.

This familiar and interesting case, illustrates very clearly and fully, the subject of this deliverance, as it shows the process of salvation. But in order to a better understanding of the subject, in reference to our experience, let us attend to a few queries.

1. Why was Saul opposed to the religion of Jesus, and to those who embraced it? Evidently because of his national prejudices, of his ignorance of the true character of the Messiah, of the beauties, the excellencies and the glories of his religion. Because of the darkness of his mind, by which he was blinded and rendered unable to recognize Jesus as the promised Messiah, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world. Because, moreover, the religion in which he was educated, and to which he was supremely devoted, was an exclusive and partial religion ; one in which the Gentile nations were not

regarded as "fellow heirs of the grace of life;" but were considered as the objects of the Divine displeasure; a religion which justified every Jew in treating the Gentiles with scorn and contempt. His was a religion that did not soften and improve the heart — that did not fill the soul with benevolence, sympathy and love. In short, his was a religion that allowed the indulgence of an unrelenting spirit of retaliation, and led its votary in the direct path of persecution, when the mild and benevolent and glorious Gospel of Christ was proclaimed.

2. By what was the heart of this persecutor, changed into the spirit of the Lamb? Plainly, by a revelation of the intrinsic value of the Gospel; by a discovery of the sublime beauties of that religion which breathes peace on earth and good will to man, and which secures the vital interests of all mankind, in the economy of grace. Thus, by Him, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, his blindness was removed, his understanding was enlightened, and he was enabled to comprehend, with all the saints, the height and depth, the length and breadth of the love of God, which passeth understanding. He saw the true character of God, and that he was

worthy of the praise and adoration of men and of angels, for his unbounded and impartial love, as manifested in the gift of his Son, as the Redeemer, Sanctifier and Savior of a sinful world. This filled his soul with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and it induced him, earnestly and affectionately and zealously, to engage in recommending this new religion, of the lovely features of which he had now caught the first glimpse.

And now, if we have discovered the process by which this "child of wrath" was "saved from wrath, through the life of Jesus;" we can have no difficulty in discovering the process by which the same grace will ultimately restore and save all other children of wrath. When all shall be brought to a knowledge of the truth, then will all be saved from wrath, through the same medium.

To conclude. The whole subject suggests to our minds, the deep importance of self-examination, that we may "know what manner of spirit we are of." This, though often painful, is nevertheless a profitable labor; and we should perform it with great faithfulness, casting the beam first from our own eye, that we may see clearly to pluck the mote from a brother's. Let us guard against

a spirit of wrath, as we would against the most deadly poison. Let us ever remember, that we experience just so much of heaven, as we do of love. May the kingdom of heaven be within us ; and may we ever feel to call upon Christ, to come into his garden, and partake of its pleasant fruits.

AMEN.

PRAYER.

OUR FATHER who art in heaven, we recognize and acknowledge thee as our Creator ; for it is thou that hast made us, and not we ourselves. We rejoice in the consciousness that we are thine. We are thy creatures ; we are the subjects of thy moral government ; we are thy children, and the destined heirs of that immortality which has been brought to light, in the Gospel of thy Son. Thou hast distinguished us from thy irrational creation, by the bestowment of those powers and faculties which render us susceptible of improvement in wisdom, in knowledge, and in understanding. Thou hast endowed us with the attribute of mind, by which we are enabled to rise from the grovelling things of earth, and to obtain an acquaintance with our

Maker and our God. Thou hast exhibited before us, in various forms, the evidences of thy paternal character, and the testimonials of unchanging and impartial goodness; thus inducing us to confide in thee, under all the circumstances in which we may be placed in life, and to hope in thy mercy, in the solemn hour of death.

We thank thee, O ! Lord, for the crowning evidence of thy boundless love to the world, which we behold in the gift of thy beloved Son Jesus Christ, as the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world — as a Teacher come from God — as our bright and most glorious example — as the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world, and as the resurrection and the life. We devoutly thank thee, that thou hast favored us with a revelation of thyself, and of thy holy will and purposes, in the volume of inspiration; that thou hast given it to us as the man of our counsel, the rule and guide of our faith and practice, and that it is able to make us wise unto salvation. We thank thee for the sacred institutions of the Gospel; for the ministry of reconciliation, which thou hast ordained and established; and for the manifestations of thy

Holy Spirit, in bringing thy sons from far, and thy daughters from the ends of the earth.

Holy Father! when we reflect upon what thou art, and upon what thou hast done, and art still doing for the children of men; we have great reason to humble ourselves before thee; to mourn and lament our numerous sins and transgressions against thee, and to implore thy pardoning grace and mercy. We would acknowledge that we have wandered far from thee; that we have been prone to forget the source from whence our blessings have descended; and that we have sought for happiness in the follies and vanities of this vain and inconstant world. Yet thou hast informed us, that if we are faithful to confess our sins, thou art faithful and just to forgive us our sins; and that the blood of Jesus Christ cleaneth us from all sin. May thy goodness lead us to unfeigned repentance; and may we henceforth, live devoted to thee, as dear children. May we cultivate that devotion to thee, and that fraternal affection and charity to mankind, which is enjoined in the pure precepts and illustrious examples of our blessed Master; and thus may we show forth to the world around us, that we have learned of Jesus.

May thy truth — which maketh free indeed — have free course, run and be glorified, that its saving influences may be felt in all hearts, that all the ends of the earth may see the salvation of our God. Wilt thou, O! Lord, grant us fortitude under all the trials of life, wisdom to direct us in the path of duty, and thy grace to sustain us in all the events of our pilgrimage upon the earth. May we serve thee acceptably, while we dwell in these frail tenements of clay; be cheered by the light of thy countenance, in the hour of death; and be crowned thine, in the mansions of eternal rest. We ask and offer all, in the name, and as the disciples of Jesus Christ, through whom, to thee be ascribed the power and glory, forever,

AMEN.

SERMON II.

THE CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLE.

BY REV. CALVIN GARDNER, WATERVILLE.

II KINGS: VI: 21.

AND THE KING OF ISRAEL SAID UNTO ELISHA, WHEN HE SAW THEM, "MY FATHER, SHALL I SMITE THEM? SHALL I SMITE THEM?"

FOR SOME reason or other—precisely for what reason, if any he had, we cannot tell—but, at any rate, let the history inform us, "The king of Syria warred against Israel," and took counsel with his servants, how he might successfully prosecute his designs, and accomplish the unholy ends at which he aimed. The progress and result of this enterprise, are recorded in the history with which the text is connected, and which, in the outset, we may do well to notice.

Calmet says, "An ambitious and restless prince, always finds a sufficiency of reasons to color his enterprizes." It may be so, or it may not be so. But if Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria, in the case now to be noticed, had any reasons for the war he was about to carry on against Israel, either real or pretended, sacred history has been quite too deficient in stating them. We are let in upon his warlike designs, by the proclamation of his intentions to war against the king of Israel, and to conquer him, if possible, by stratagem—take him, and make him captive, by surprize. To this end, he placed himself in a position, and arranged his legions, so as to pursue the plans he had proposed, to the greatest possible advantage. Doubtless, he had already fancied himself the actor, and heard, in his waking dreams, the shout of triumph echo and re-echo throughout his vast domains. But this was *all* a dream; for he was destined, in the providence of God, to witness the utter prostration of all his hopes in relation to this unjust and wicked enterprize.

In the camp of Israel, there was a man, who is designated in the history, "THE MAN OF GOD;" and who could scan, at a single

intuitive glance, the deep designs, and all the secret plans and movements of the ambitious and daring Syrian. This was Elisha, the favored prophet of the Lord. He had already penetrated the secret purposes of Ben-Hadad; knew all his plans of operation; understood how far he intended to proceed with his army, and where he had determined to encamp. This valuable information he freely communicated, through an appointed messenger, to the king of Israel, who availed himself of the intelligence, and thus saved himself, more than once, as the history says, from the hand of his enemy. Indeed, he was thus enabled to baffle, at all points, the skill of his adversary, and secure to himself all the advantages which he could possibly desire. He was enabled, even, to turn the designs which had been formed against him, to the discomfiture and destruction of his enemies.

He did so; and the Syrian king was sorely troubled, perplexed, and dismayed by the movements he had made. He supposed that all his secret purposes were secure in his own bosom, or rested perhaps, in the bosoms of a few of his trusty and faithful friends; and when he found that they were all in the possession of his enemy, the king of Israel, he

was confounded, and astounded, and knew not what course to pursue. But the question at once started up in his mind, how came these secrets known to the king of Israel, “mine enemy ? ” Is there a traitor in the camp? Will any one show us *who* is for the enemy? But his suspicions, in this matter, were all unfounded. One of his servants, more wise than himself, frankly told him, that he had no traitor in his camp; but that “Elisha, the prophet that is in Israel, telleth the king of Israel, the words that he spake in his bed-chamber.” * * * * Enraged at this information, “Go,” said he, “go, and spy where he is, that I may send and fetch him” ! * * * * How short-sighted! How foolish! Did he suppose that Elisha, who knew all his secrets, and could penetrate all his designs, would suffer himself to be taken unawares, and led into captivity? But the haughty Syrian did not enter into these calculations; and, accordingly, he sent his horses, and chariots, and a great host, to encompass the city, where Elisha was, and to take him, as we may suppose their direction was, dead or alive. “They encompassed the city about; ” so says the history; and what was the result of it? Fear, to be sure, came

over the inhabitants of that city; but not over the “man of God.” When he arose in the morning, and went forth, “He beheld the mighty hosts, the horses and the chariots;” but his heart failed him not, for his trust was placed in God. * * * * His servant, intimidated by the threatening aspect, said to him, “Alas! my master, how shall we do?” * * * * Hear his manful and confident reply: “Fear not, for they that be with us, are more than they that be with them.” To convince him of this fact, he prayed that the young man’s eyes might be opened; and when he looked up, he saw, and behold, “The mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire, round about Eli-sha.” God had not forsaken his servant, in this extremity, but had provided him with all the necessary means of defence, and given him undoubted assurances of success. And success came, in due time. By the exercise of the power which God had given him for the purpose, the Syrian band were smitten with blindness, and were led, even before they were aware of their danger, into the hand of their enemies—“in the midst of Samaria.” There they stood—captives to the king of Israel—entirely at his disposal

— subject to his supreme will. They had come, without reason, to war against the Israelites, and to take captive the man of God; and behold! they are now, themselves, captives, in the hands of their enemies. But such is the fate of war. The aggressor, in the end, seldom escapes the doom and destiny he deserves.

Turn now your thoughts to this large band of Syrian captives, who, by the fortunes of war, have been placed in the hands of Israel's king. They had engaged in that war, so far as we can learn from the history, without any just provocation; and, for that very reason, they were entitled to as little mercy as were any captives, under any circumstances. They had been sent out for the especial purpose of seizing upon the man of God, and taking him to the land of Syria, at whatever risks they might run in doing it. Had they succeeded in their undertaking, would they not have compelled him to grace the triumph of their leader, bound to his chariot wheels, as they entered their native land? Would they ever have permitted him to live upon the earth? No matter. These questions we cannot answer. All we know is, that they were unsuccessful in their efforts, and were

made prisoners of war, by their enemies; that they were husbands, and fathers, and brothers, and sons, to many whom they had left in Syria, and whom they desired to meet again, and embrace, in the land of the living. But their destiny, so far as this world was concerned, seemed now to be in the hands of their victorious enemy. Life or death was before them, and they trembled at the result. A word could save them, or a word could destroy them. Judge ye, then, with what conflicting emotions they heard the question, proposed by the king of Israel, to Elisha:—
“ My father, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them? ” Upon the issue of that question, hung all their hopes and all their fears. If yea, all their hopes were dashed forever to the earth, and their doom was fixed; if nay, their fears were dispersed upon the winds of heaven, and they could anticipate a speedy return to their native country. What important consequences hung upon the answer to that question! Thank God, the spirit and power of religion dictated that answer, and they were saved. The man of God, spoke, and they were all set at liberty. Listen to his answer, and give heed to it: “ Thou shalt not smite them; wouldst thou smite

those whom thou hast made captive with thy sword and thy bow? * * * * *

Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master."

Here is exhibited a spirit of true greatness — true magnanimity. Elisha was the object of their particular hatred — the person, whom, above all others, they were anxious to secure, and make captive, and perhaps destroy. All the energies of the Syrian king, had been put in requisition, and all his art, and management, and intrigue, had been employed, to bring him within the reach of his power, and make him feel the weight of his vengeance. How easily could the man of God now have turned upon his enemy, and made him the sport of vindictive revenge, and inflicted upon him all the evils which had been designed against him! But no; he chose another way to gain his purpose, and accomplish the end at which he aimed. Though, by a single word, the whole army of Syrian captives might have been smitten to the earth, and involved in one indiscriminate slaughter — a mode of revenge, which, in that age of the world, was not an uncommon one, — yet, in the spirit of true philanthropy, he gave direction not only for their immediate libera-

tion, but for all such provisions as were necessary for them, in the circumstances in which they were placed. Bountifully did he supply all their wants; "And when they had eaten and drank," as the history testifies, "he sent them away, and they went to their master." And the greatness of that deed, will carry his name down to posterity, and cause it to be held in everlasting remembrance.

But what was the result of this act of magnanimity, upon the conduct of his enemies? Were its consequences good or bad? The answer to these questions may be expressed in a very few words — and in the words, too, of the sacred historian: "So the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel."

Now we are all ready to admit that Elisha, in this case, acted upon high and honorable principles; acted magnanimously; and gained for himself a renown which shall never perish. We are all ready to give him the credit he deserves, for practising upon that benevolent principle of action, and sparing the lives of the captive army, and sending them back to their native land, blessed with the undeserved bounties he had bestowed upon them. We are all ready to allow, too, that he adopted *the most successful method of overcoming*

their hostile feelings, their warlike intentions, and of making them his friends. But is there a single virtue, exhibited in his whole character, or in any of his conduct, which, as Christians, we are not all bound to practice? Does not the Master, in whose service we profess to be engaged, impose it upon us a duty, to render good for evil, and to overcome the hostile intentions of our enemies, by treating them with kindness and courtesy? Are we not expressly forbidden to practice upon the principle of retaliation; that is, to demand "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth?" We are much deceived, if we do not discover in the conduct of the prophet, in the case before us, an exemplification of the great duties of Christianity, and an enforcement of the principles of action, proper, upon all occasions to be observed and practiced. It is, in fact, a practical illustration of the Christian requirement, *to "overcome evil with good;"* an illustration, we hope, which will not by us be passed over unnoticed. It is capable of an extensive application; and we hope, by each one of us, it may be promptly and profitably made.

The question proposed in the text, by the king of Israel, and the answer given to it, by

the man of God, brings to our mind a singular incident, recorded in the history of the blessed Savior. When Jesus and his disciples were passing through Samaria, — not far from the spot where the scene already presented, was enacted — and where it was ascertained that the village, to which they were then approaching, would not receive him, — two of his disciples, James and John, proposed to him the question, “Lord, shall we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” How nearly does this question, and the spirit of it, correspond with that in the text, “My master, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them?” But Jesus laid down the same principle of action, and manifested the same spirit, as did Elisha, in the history we have presented. He turned to the disciples, and, rebuking them, said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of—for the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.” So it truly is. Those who are anxious to repel injuries, by the practice of injuries, know little of the spirit and principles of Christianity — know little of the character and disposition of their Master, or what will be well pleasing in the sight of God. It is

not consistent with the plans and operations of the throne of heaven, to render evil for evil—but contrariwise,—to manifest a forgiving spirit, a spirit of love, even to the unthankful, the wicked, the rebellious. And this spirit should be the prevailing characteristic of all, who bear the name of Christians, and who would do honor to the cause they have espoused. They should all be careful to carry into practice, so far as they may be able, the principles of the religion they profess, and act according to its plain dictates. It is only by so doing, that they can honor the profession they have made, and exert a good influence upon the community in which they live. If they love the Master, they should obey his commandments.

But the principle of action now insisted upon, so far as it regards man's conduct towards man, is generally well understood, even if it be not so generally practiced as we could wish. And we will add, in honor to the nature we possess, that it is much more frequently carried out into practice, than we are apt to imagine. The spirit of revenge—the spirit of retaliation, will sometimes cry out, shall I smite mine enemies? shall I smite them? But it is very often met by the be-

nevolent spirit of Christianity, interposing the affectionate plea, spare them, Oh! spare them. Oftener than we are disposed to think, are injuries overlooked, forgiven, forgotten, in the Christian community. And we hope the practice may continue to prevail, until it shall become universal. Let the good work go on, and go on, not only until all individuals shall become Christians, in principle and practice, but until all the nations of the earth shall become Christianized, and shall learn the art of war no more. Christianity will not have accomplished its high aims, and attained its destined elevation, until all the kingdoms of this lower world shall become the kingdoms of Christ, and be guided and influenced by his pacific religious principles. Christ must reign, until he hath put all enemies under his feet, and delivered up the kingdom to his Father, that God may be all in all.

* * * * *

But we are disposed to carry this principle of action, farther; to carry the application of our subject, farther; and see what bearing it will have upon the government of heaven, and the conduct of the Master whom we profess to serve. God has made it the duty of

man, in his intercourse with his fellow man, to forgive his enemies, as Elisha did the Syrian captive, and treat them kindly and compassionately. Jesus, when on the earth, distinctly taught this doctrine, and enforced it by his illustrious example. But it is sometimes the case, that men will enforce doctrine upon others, which they do not desire to practice themselves—which they will not make the rule of their own conduct. They will point out the way to others, but will not walk therein themselves. Is it so with the government of heaven? Is it so with the infinite Jehovah? Is it so with the Son of man? Let us consider these questions, and note the result.

We are aware that, for some reason or other, perhaps as indefinable as that which led the Syrian king against the Israelites, men have rebelled against the government of God, and have sinned, with a high hand, against the requirements of heaven. But they are waging war against a power which they cannot long withstand, and to which, at last, they must be brought under absolute subjection. In prospect, with an eye of faith, we can see the armies of the living God, holding successful conflict with the prince of

this world, and forcing his well marshaled legions to submit to the authority of the King of heaven. We can see them, like the armies of Syria, made captives, and standing before the throne of heaven, awaiting the sentence, in painful suspense, to be pronounced upon them. A frown from the Almighty, can blast them forever, and render their condition entirely miserable. The spirit of omnipotent revenge, speaks, shall I smite them? Shall I smite them? Shall fire be commanded from heaven, to consume them? Shall they go down to regions of endless woe, "where hope can never come, that comes to all?" Shall they be doomed to torments interminable—to anguish unutterable? In all these inquiries, what saith the spirit of love? What saith the immaculate Jehovah? What saith the Divine Redeemer? What saith the man of God, the true Christian? Smite them? No! "Wouldst thou smite them whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and thy bow?" Smite them? No! "Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." Smite them? No! "Overcome evil with good; resist not unto blood; love your enemies; do good to them that hate you; and

pray for them that spitefully use you and persecute you." Smite them? No! "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

This, this, would be the prompt reply of heaven; and this would manifest the spirit of that religion which was sent from on high, as our guide on earth, and the rule of our faith and practice. It would be an illustration of the principle of action, by which we are required to regulate our conduct in the earth, and which should characterize the conduct of every one who has named the name of Christ. It would be, in short, in perfect accordance with these laws, by which heaven could regulate the conduct of all moral, intelligent beings.

Thus we see, that the question proposed in the text, involves a principle of action, utterly at variance with the spirit and design of Christianity, the happiness of man, and the government of God. Were the suggestion acted upon— as it too often is— it would drench the earth we inhabit, with blood, and fill the world with lamentations and tears. Thank God, there is a better principle prevailing. The spirit of the religion of Jesus, is going forth, in its purity and power—in its

native strength and energy—and will ultimately influence all created intelligences.

The revengeful spirit of the world, which would smite the adversary—which would carry on its conquests, with garments rolled in blood—is giving place, we hope, to the forgiving principles, inculcated by the Savior, and enjoined upon all his disciples. Let it be so. We hail with joy, every indication in the religious world, which presages the triumph of “the glorious gospel of the blessed God,” and assures us of the ultimate reign of the Redeemer. Let his kingdom be established in all the earth. Let it be done! Let it be done! And unto God, Most High, shall be the glory.

PRAYER.

GREAT SPIRIT of the universe! Thine we are, and unto Thee we come, reverently bowing before thy throne, and lifting up our souls to Thee, in supplication and prayer. Dependent upon Thee, as we all are, for all the blessings we need, both for time and eternity, we would approach thy holy presence with

deep humility and reverence ; remembering how kind thou hast been unto us, how many unmerited favors thou has bestowed upon us, how many tokens of thy distinguishing mercy thou hast manifested to us, and how many obligations of gratitude we are under to Thee for all thy mindfulness of us, in all the periods and conditions of our existence. Deeply sensible are we, that Thou hast ever been our friend and constant benefactor, and hast ever opened to us, in the order of thy Providence, thy bountiful hand, and supplied us with all things needful for our subsistence, and even for our temporal enjoyment, here upon the earth ; nor hast thou been unmindful of our spiritual wants and spiritual welfare. Even when the world was dead in sin, and wandering far from Thee in forbidden paths, Thou wast pleased, in the infinite plenitude of thy goodness, to send forth from thy presence, thine only Son, thy well-beloved, to seek and to save the lost, and gather into the spiritual kingdom, the redeemed family of man. Thanks be unto Thee, for this, thy unspeakably great and glorious gift to man ! Thanks be unto Thee, for all He hath done for a sinful race, and for what He is yet to accomplish in due time ! Thanks be to Thee,

56 PRAYER BY REV. CALVIN GARDNER.

for the spirit of love which He manifested upon the earth, for the precious truths which He communicated to man, for his disinterested devotion to the cause of humanity, for his noble triumphs over all suffering, sin, and death ! Glory to thy name ! that He hath lived, labored, suffered, died, and risen again, for the salvation of intelligent humanity, from sin and error, and even from the bondage of corruption, and thine exaltation in ceaseless and endless beatitude. Through Him, thou hast accomplished all this great good for man, and unto Thee belongeth all the glory. Though man had sinned, and even rebelled against thy government and laws, yet Thou wast pleased to reveal Thyself to him, in the person of thy Son, as a sin-forgiving God, and the Redeemer and Savior of all the souls thou hadst created and made. And now, we praise Thee for thy goodness ; we bless Thee for thy saving grace ; we rejoice in the glorious results of thy power ; we glorify Thee for the stupendous witness of thy love—“ For of Thee, and through Thee, and to Thee, are all things ; in whom be glory, forever. Amen.”

SERMON III.

MAN'S FREE VOLITION, AND GOD'S
SUPREME GOVERNMENT.

BY REV. F. A. HODSDON, BELFAST.

GENESIS XLV: 5.

“BE NOT GRIEVED NOR ANGRY WITH YOURSELVES, THAT
YE SOLD ME HITHER; FOR GOD DID SEND ME BEFORE
YOU TO PRESERVE LIFE.”

No portion of sacred history more fully reveals the moral government of God, than the account of Joseph and his brethren. It unravels the mystery of the present moral state; shows how mortals may act according to the free volition of their wills, and yet not be beyond the controlling will of Almighty God; how they can go to the utmost length of their own volitions, and yet, never go beyond that point, where the Divine will

directs and influences, so as to secure what perfect benignity dictates. It shows how good is brought out of evil, and how those very agents who meant the evil, after having passed through the tribulation and anguish which are inseparably connected with their crime, are brought to participate in the very blessings they have labored to destroy. It shows, too, when the desired consummation is secured, how those who have thought evil, and have labored to frustrate the designs of heaven, may cease to be grieved and angry with themselves, in seeing that their wickedness has been overruled in such a manner, as to promote the glory of God and the good of his creatures.

God revealed to Joseph, in a dream, that his brethren should bow to him. This prediction excited their envy, and they determined that they would not bow, and took such measures as they thought would forever prevent the fulfilment of the prediction. But mark! How directly they were led, by the free volition of their own wills, to choose that course, and to adopt those measures that were the necessary condition to bring the end about which God had revealed.

They sold him to a travelling company of

Ishmael merchants, to be carried to Egypt for a slave. They supposed that they had effectually frustrated the purpose of heaven, and should forever be saved from the humiliation of bowing before Joseph; and for twenty years they suffered remorse and anguish, for having acted thus cruelly towards an unoffending and affectionate brother. They did not dream that causes were operating, all that time, to bring about what they supposed they had rendered forever impossible. But how short sighted!

Joseph was carried to Egypt, and after passing through, in slavery, what seemed a scene of most singular ill-fortune, he at last rose from the very dungeon of a prison, to be prime minister of Egypt. In this office, he acted with great wisdom, and having foreseen, through the dream of Pharaoh, that the land was to be visited with seven years of famine, he laid up, from the superabundant harvests of the seven years of plenty, sufficient for the seven years of famine. As the famine also extended to the house of Jacob, Joseph's father, want compelled all the brethren, except Benjamin, to go down to Egypt, to buy corn. Joseph at once recognized his brethren, *though* twenty years had elapsed

since he was parted from them, at the dictates of a most malignant will; but the brethren knew him not, and, for a season, he was pleased to keep himself concealed from their knowledge. But, at last, he made himself known; freely forgave them; made them welcome to the good of the land of Egypt; and, in the language of affection, entreated them not to be grieved nor angry with themselves, that they sold him; for God had sent him before them, to preserve life.

How perfectly the hand of God was manifested in the whole transaction! How certainly and infalibly, did he do his will, and, at the same time, do no violence to a single individual of those agents who were employed to bring it about! They were as free, in this wonderful providence of God, as in any acts of their lives. Of their own free will, they sold their brother; of their own free will, they went into Egypt, to buy corn; and of their own free will, they bowed before Joseph, as predicted. Yet God moved on the whole, according to the council of his own will, and brought the whole to pass, just as he determined from the beginning. They did their wills, and God did his; and the result was most sublime and glorious, even to

those weak, deluded, and impious wretches who presumed to frustrate the divine purpose.

By this transaction, their own lives, the lives of their wives and little ones, of Jacob, their father, and, indeed, of the whole land of Egypt, were saved from starvation. A most unexampled display of mercy and benevolence, on the part of Joseph, was manifested towards his brethren, in forgiving them, in weeping over them, in all the richness of human affection, comforting them under their trials of shame and remorse, and in bestowing every token of a generous and noble soul. Truly, “where sin abounded grace did much more abound.”

But I must come more directly to my design in this discourse. It is known that there is a great deal of perplexity laboring in many minds, in regard to what will be the state of our feelings, when introduced into another existence, and we remember that we have existed in this world, where there is much evil, that has been brought about through our agency. Though forgiven of God, and admitted to his presence, will not regret rest upon our minds, for having sinned against that holy Being, whose purposes towards us were

always the most benevolent, who has forgiven all our sins, and admitted us to his presence and blessing in the kingdom of immortality? Though we may be perfectly reconciled to God, yet how can we be reconciled to ourselves, in view of our ingratitude and rebellion against One who deserves nothing but the unceasing and supreme love and service of every moral being?

Many persons profess to see no way that regret can be removed from the mind, in the future world, if the remembrance of this life shall be retained. It is not uncommon to hear the doctrine proclaimed, by those who claim to have made large advances in christian theology, that though in the future world we may be free from all the corruptions of this life, and be perfectly holy, yet, we may unceasingly regret that we were sinners in this life. But I shall undertake to show that such a doctrine is unreasonable and unscriptural; and from the text I shall draw an argument to show how the regret may be taken from the mind; and, in truth, how we may be reconciled to all the mysterious workings of Providence, in this lower world.

If it be true that our evil conduct in this *life*, is *forever* to be remembered, with re-

gret, in the world to come, then eternity will be forever stained with the imperfections of time. There will not be a solitary being there, who was once here, and remained sufficiently long to become accountable, that will not suffer more or less for having passed through this world ; for all who here become accountable are guilty of something, either in thought, word, or deed, which is inconsistent with perfect purity and urightness. If regret is forever to linger around the souls of the intelligent creation, who were once accountable creatures on earth, then there can be no such thing as a perfect heaven with them. So far as there is a degree of discontent and unreconciliation lingering about the soul, just so far there is a want of perfection ; something needs to be removed from the mind, and its place supplied with that which is satisfactory.

If this doctrine be true, then the divine character itself is imperfect. We are introduced into this world, not by our own will and agency, but by the will and agency of Almighty God. Paul affirms that we are subjected to vanity by reason of him who hath subjected us in hope. Now, to say that evil consequences shall forever follow, from our existence in this world, is a direct impeach-

ment of the Divine character. It teaches that he is either lacking in wisdom and power to devise an effectual method of removing it, or, if he has the wisdom and power, he is wanting in the goodness necessary to prompt him to the work. To say that he has introduced his creatures into a state where they are made subject to evils, that can never be removed or overcome, is a reflection upon the Divine character which we should be slow to make, while everything in his universe, so far as human ken can reach, testifies that he is a Being infinitely perfect in all his attributes.

No Christian denies that God is a Being of perfect character—infinite in wisdom, in goodness and power. Now the exercise of these attributes in the government of the world, must produce perfection. They must institute, and carry out, a system perfect in all its parts. God must impress his image upon his universe ; he must work like himself and establish the perfection of his character upon the universe he has created and governs with absolute control. As certain as there is a God of infinite wisdom and goodness, who determines the final estates of his creatures, there can be no one thing which will not harmonize *with the dictates of wisdom and goodness.*

To say that endless evil will result to the intelligent creation, who are made in the image of God to be immortal, is to deny the perfection of God. It is to say that he is wanting in wisdom, or goodness, or power.—It is virtually denying the existence of a God of infinite perfection, for it is a proposition, never to be controverted, that a being who has a will, will carry out that will, if he is possessed of sufficient power to do it. If imperfection, or evil, result from the arrangements of the present existence, which shall forever prove to be imperfection and evil, then there can be no God of perfection who governs the world.

Such is the impious conclusion that is involved in every system which teaches that intelligent beings will suffer forever, in the world to come, in consequence of having passed through this world, where they are subjected to vanity. No matter whether that suffering consist in absolute and unutterable torment, in a prison of despair, called hell, among demons and infuriated spirits, or in the faintest lingerings of regret, in heaven, among angels and the glorified hosts! If there is something wanting to complete the perfection of their being, if some evil shall need to be re-

moved, and its place be supplied with good, it argues a want of perfection in the Divine character. Let us be careful that we do not adopt a theory so impious.

I am aware that it is sometimes argued, that there is evil resulting from the Divine government, as it is here arranged and develops itself; and if evil exists now, why may it not hereafter and forever? I answer, at once, because it is inconsistent with the perfections of God. His character is an immutable pledge that what we call evil, cannot remain without end. But what we call evil, is embraced in the means of advancing the work of grace, or infinite benevolence, and is to be laid aside when the work is completed. The imperfections of this life, are the same in the government of God, as the scaffolding which the artisan rears about the building he is erecting. It is necessary to its completion, but makes no part of the finished building. It is merely temporary, and to be removed when it has answered its temporary purpose. This is the legitimate conclusion of unassisted reason, from the promises that God is infinitely good, and wise, and peaceful.

We have a most lucid exemplification of

the truth of this doctrine, in the history of Joseph's exaltation, and the blessing that finally came to his brethren. The evil which they committed, in selling him, and the misery which they suffered, in consequence of their guilt, were all necessary to the benevolent consummation secured. But it was all temporary, and was all to pass away and to be forgotten, when the great end should be accomplished. With just as much propriety it might have been said, while that work was moving on to its completion, while the brethren were devising means to banish Joseph from their presence, and to save themselves from bowing before him; and while they were suffering the lashes of a guilty conscience, with just as much propriety it might have been said, "this evil will be final; the time will never come, when it will end and be succeeded by good," as we can now say, of any evil, it will continue forever; it will never give place to that which is perfect and glorious. But, as in the history before us, the evil was made to work out good, both to Joseph and his brethren, as it passed away and left them in the rich enjoyment of what it had been made the means of accomplishing, so we have a right, and, in truth, we are

bound, by the known perfections of Almighty God, to conclude that such shall be the case with all that we call evil. It shall pass away, and the whole universe shall be established in the blessedness which this evil has contributed in bringing about.

But we are not left to an unassisted reason, to make this conclusion. The word of God, kindly comes in here, to put the matter beyond doubt. God says, by the mouth of Isaiah, “I form the light, and create the darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I, the Lord, do all these things.” Here God declares himself to be the author of the darkness as well as the light ; of evil as well as of peace. For what has he created them ? As he is goodness itself, he must have created them for a good purpose ; and, as he has every necessary qualification to direct, they must secure the desired good.

Paul, in his epistle to the Romans, makes the whole subject plain. He says, “the law entered, that the offence might abound. But when sin abounded, grace did much more abound ; that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord.” Here, then, we see, by the testi-

mony of inspiration, that grace is made to abound much more than it otherwise would be by the abounding of sin; and that though sin reigns unto death, yet grace reigns through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ, our Lord.

If these words of the apostle are allowed to be good testimony, then adieu, forever adieu, to the doctrine that the human race will be made losers by the imperfections and evils to which they are here subjected. On the contrary, they are to be made glorious by the circumstance of their existence in this life. Grace is made to abound, *much more*, by the circumstances of this disciplinary state. But how can this be true, if the *evil* consequences of sin are to follow us into eternity, either to make us intensely wretched in hell, or to mingle bitterness with the *sweet* joys of heaven, by lingering regrets which shall cling to the soul? Impossible.

It will be admitted, by all, that if man had never sinned, he could never have felt guilt or regret. There could have been no suffering from moral delinquency. How then can it be said, in truth, that the evils of the present existence, will produce a superabounding

of grace, which is to reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, if sin is to produce remorse or regret to all eternity? It cannot. The doctrine is false, therefore, that evil will remain to all eternity, to produce suffering.

But let us look, once more, to the testimony of the apostle, in regard to the consequences of sin. "For if, through the offence of one, many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the free gift. For the judgment was by one, to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences, unto justification. Therefore, as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men, to condemnation, even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men, to justification of life." Here, then, we are assured, that, by Jesus Christ, the world—all men—are saved from all the evil consequences of transgression. Those who are condemned by sin, are justified by the grace manifested in Christ. The justification extends just as far as the condemnation. This testimony of the apostle, outweighs all the doctrines of uninspired men to the con-

trary, and forever settles the question, that evil will not be suffered to mar the harmony and glory of God's moral universe.

All through the Bible, it is taught that evil shall come to an end. "God shall rest in his love," is the voice of inspiration. Yes, he will rest in that love, which, the "beloved disciple" declares, can work "no ill to its neighbor." He will rest in it, when the veil that is spread over all nations, shall be destroyed; when death shall be swallowed up in victory, and tears wiped off from all faces. Jesus is engaged to effect the work—to reign till every enemy is subdued, and God is all in all. And can he be all in all, while regret and torment rest upon his children? No, never, till all beings are established in the holiness of his nature, and his own peace, which passeth understanding, shall fill every soul.

Having shown that evil is not to have an endless effect in producing misery or regret, I will now proceed to show how this benign result, of removing the evil effects of sin from the mind, may be brought about. This important light is reflected from the text. "Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves,

that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you, to preserve life."

Joseph's brethren acted as freely in selling him, as in anything they ever did ; still, Joseph tells them that it was God who sent him before them, to preserve life. He teaches very plainly, that they were the agents employed to do the will of God ; that the whole course of proceeding against him, from the day that their envy was excited, until they came into his presence, was designed to bring about the very blessing they were then realizing ; that the hand of God, though unseen, had been in the whole, and turned their evil into good. He desired that they should view the matter in this grateful light, and cease to be grieved and angry with themselves. Whether they fully realized the force of their brother's remarks, and gained that clear view of the Divine control, which reconciled them to the whole mysterious scene through which they had passed, we are not particularly informed. But, admitting they did view the subject in the light in which he presented it to them ; admitting that they saw themselves but agents in the hands of God, to bring about his purpose to exalt Joseph ; and,

through his presence and foresight, to preserve life ; admitting they realized that God had directed the whole, and brought them to be partakers of a great blessing, in the benevolence and affection of Joseph ; had they thus seen themselves, suddenly translated from the darkness and perverseness of their own minds, into the overwhelming light of the Divine will, how soon would their souls have been filled with admiration and rapture ! They would have been lost and overwhelmed with a delicious joy, in view of the wisdom and benevolence of God, which could bring such blessings from the very bosom of evil, and pour them, in all their fullness and richness, upon the heads of those who had impiously presumed to frustrate his righteous plans. Their hearts would have been so full of gratitude and joy, that there would have been no place for a lingering regret.

And will it not be so with all, when introduced into the world of light, and the presence of our Redeemer ? Will not He, who, while on earth, was the sinner's friend, and whose affections have not alienated from the creatures of earth, though with the hands of violence and wickedness, they thrust him from their presence, and who now stands at the

“right hand of power,” in heaven, to intercede for those for whom he shed his blood, will he not be ready to direct us to the consideration, that we have been brought through this lower world, by the hand of God, and that the whole strange scene of time, with all its lights and shades, has been employed to heighten the grandeur and beauty of eternity? Yes; we verily believe, yea, more, we know, from the perfections of Almighty God, that it must be so. The Redeemer taught, while among men, that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without our heavenly Father’s notice; and that the very hairs of our heads, are all numbered; and can we doubt, for a moment, that this sublime and transporting thought, will be pressed home upon the mind, and carried out in all its wonderful and benevolent bearings, when we shall be translated from the darkness of time, to the light of eternity? No, no; we shall then be brought to realize, in all the grandeur and grace, and sublimity of the thought, that the Lord reigns, and does his will and pleasure in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. We shall discover how everything has been directed by the unerring hand of God, so as to secure the

good he designed ; how the darkness as well as the light, the discord as well as the harmony, the evil as well as the good, have all been made tributary to the one great end, which is the prompting of benevolence ; and, that whatever part we may have acted in the drama of human life, has been made by the wise direction of God, to contribute to the perfection of the consummation. Will it not be so? Yes, the perfections of God, are a pledge that it must be so.

In view of such knowledge how will the soul be filled with admiration, with gratitude, and the transports of delight ! And where, O ! where will there be room for remorse or regret when the soul is thus filled with the glory of the Divine character? There will be no room. All that is unlike God will be driven out and forgotten forever! Why, even in this dim world of ours, when one is fully converted to God, realizes the mercy which has forgiven his sins, and assured him of the everlasting favor and affection of heaven, he is filled with the fulness of joy, and rejoices in the fulness of glory. He forgets, in his admiration, the sins that weighed him down in condemnation and wrath, and seems to be standing in the presence of God, where all is

pure and beautiful and felicitous! How much more, then, shall it be so, when we shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption, translated into the immediate presence of God, and behold him as he is!

But it will be asked, will it not have an evil tendency upon men, to teach them that all evil will be overruled for good? Will not men say, let us do evil that good may come? I answer no; this is the very doctrine that must sanctify the soul and keep it from sin. If, when God revealed to Joseph his future exaltation, the brethren had been possessed of a perfect faith in a God of love, who does everything for the highest possible good, and consequently believed that if Joseph was to be exalted above them, it would be a work of mercy and justice, could they have been excited with envy? No. If they had had faith in the revelation made to Joseph, they would have labored to do that which seemed necessary to bring about the exaltation, instead of trying to frustrate it. And had it been made known to them, that it was necessary that Joseph should go into Egypt, as a slave, and to pass through severe trials to his destined eminence, then they could have sold him just as they did, and there would

have been no sin in the case ; for they would, with God, have "meant it unto good." It was want of faith in the overruling power of a God of infinite wisdom and goodness that made them envious and cruel. Such a faith would have kept enmity from their hearts and caused the hands of violence to have lain powerless at their sides.

The want of such a faith is the principle cause of all the wickedness among men.—Just let the inhabitants of this world live in the firm and unwavering persuasion, that a God of infinite love controlled every thing in infinite wisdom, for the greatest possible good of all beings, and that there can be no such thing as choosing a better way, and how soon would all things be changed in human character and condition. This world would no longer be a "revolted dominion of Jehovah's empire." There would be no hatred towards God or man. The divine laws would never be maliciously violated. So far as moral conduct is concerned this would be a very perfect world.

But men lack faith in the wisdom, and goodness, and power of God, and therefore do they sin. They are unreconciled to the ways of Providence ; they have but little or

no faith in the wisdom, and goodness of God to devise and execute the best possible plan to secure the highest interests of his creatures. They, therefore, do not hesitate to trample under foot what are revealed as the laws of Heaven, and trust to their own wisdom to devise a better plan, and to secure a better portion. All this comes from a want of faith in a God of infinite perfection who rules with absolute control. But in the same proportion that such a faith is exercised, in the same proportion does man become reconciled to God ; the will is swallowed up in his will, and to abide in his service is the soul's delight.

It is true that we have never seen but one example of a perfect faith on earth. That was in Jesus Christ ; and how exalted in all that is pure and godlike, was the life it produced ! How it overcame the world, and enabled him to go through it without receiving a single stain upon the bright escutcheon of his character. He believed, that in comparison, there is none good but God, and that this God of goodness controls all things, from the mightiest to the meanest, from unnumbered worlds to the fall of a sparrow. In this faith he lived and moved, while on earth ; and it kept him in constant communion and associa-

tion with his Father, so, though temptation came near him, it could never enter his soul to poison its pure fountains. This faith is the great redeeming and sanctifying power which is needed to operate upon a world of unrecconciled and wicked men. It removes enmity and hatred from the heart, and produces contentment and peace. The possessor is satisfied and happy, and can feel no settled disposition to violate the laws of his Maker.—Say not that man will be led into sin through the influence of such a faith. No, it will purify his soul and save him from sin. It must be so.

Here, O ! objector, stop, and consider, before you presume to slander this holy faith, which discloses to the mind, a God of infinite glory and loveliness, seated upon the throne of the universe, and directing all things at his will. It is the only sure hope of poor mortals ; it is the only light which can reach, and burn brightly in all dark places. It is the only theory that can solve the mysteries of creation, and make all plain, and harmonious and grateful. Then let us cling to it, as the dearest benefaction of this mortal existence, and rejoice that the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.

AMEN.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY and eternal God, Thou art the unbounded source of benevolence and hope, and the inexhaustible fountain of light and life, communicating happiness and joy to every department of the world ; and, to celebrate Thy praise shall be the delightful employment of a universe of beings, in that glorious world where pleasures ever rise and eternal ages roll sweetly on. Thou hast seen fit, great God, in thy pleasure, to reveal Thyself in the character of Creator, and that character Thou hast impressed upon every thing around us. The smallest insect that floats in the sun-beams, witnesseth that thou art, and that thou art wise and good. The earth, and the fullness thereof, as a single specimen of thy power, was tost from thy omnipotent hand replete with miracles, when thou didst lay the foundations of the earth, when thou didst stretch the line upon it, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy—and from that interesting period to the present moment thou hast caused

the most exact order to pervade the universe. The earth has performed its regular revolutions around the sun, and its rotation upon its axis, and bringing about the various seasons of the year—annually budding and bringing forth to give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, and afford things in abundance, to satisfy the wants of thy dependent creatures. For this manifestation of thyself, we would adore and praise Thee. But in a special manner would we thank Thee for the written Word which thou hast been pleased to pass before us, through the medium of those who wrote and spake as they were moved by Thy Spirit ; and that in this Word, Thou hast made thyself known as Father and Savior, as well as Creator and Sovereign ; and that in Thy wisdom and goodness, Thou has purposed the immortality and blessedness of Thy rational offspring ; and that Thou hast assured us that in Thy omnipotence, Thy counsel shall stand, and that Thou will do all Thy pleasure. We are enabled, through Thy grace, to contemplate a time when all evil shall be destroyed, and Thy moral creation be all beautiful and blessed forevermore. For this bright and cheering hope, we would bless Thy holy name. Wilt Thou give us a cor-

82 PRAYER BY REV. F. A. HODSDON.

rect understanding of Thy character and government. May we see Thee in Thy wisdom and goodness, in every event of Thy providence; and, resigned to Thy benign will, may we be faithful in the performance of the duties enjoined upon us; may we rejoice under Thy punishment, and be possessed of consciences void of offence towards Thee and towards our fellows. Thus may we live; and with an unshaken hope of a blessed immortality for ourselves, and all people, may we die.

AMEN.

SERMON IV.

A SPIRITUAL FEAST.

BY N. C. FLETCHER, EAST THOMASTON.

ISAIAH LV: 1.

“Ho! EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH, COME YE TO THE
WATERS, AND HE THAT HATH NO MONEY; COME YE,
BUY AND EAT; YEA, COME, BUY WINE AND MILK,
WITHOUT MONEY AND WITHOUT PRICE.”

THE TEXT is a beautifully conceived and happily expressed invitation to a feast, represented by waters, wine and milk. The feast is a spiritual one. The mind needs refreshment in order to retain its vigor and increase its energies as much as the frail tenement of mortality which encloses it. The christian religion is often figuratively represented in the scriptures. It is called the waters of life, the bread of God, and the flesh and blood of Christ. *The comforts and consolations of*

the gospel are compared to the ever rising and ample waters of a living spring which is continually supplying fresh streams to invigorate, refresh and strengthen. This was a figure whose full truth the prophet knew by experience. He knew the Messiah was to appear, and open for the world a full—ample and rich fountain of comfort and happiness ; and hence, in the glowing language of the East, he penned his prophecies for the benefit of his cotemporaries. “ Wrapt into future times,” with a minuteness of description, he announces the advent — portrays the future character, labors, sufferings and triumphs of the Saviour, and the establishment and permanent success of his spiritual kingdom.

The advent of this Prince, the Jewish nation had anticipated in every period of their history with ardent solicitude. Signs and miracles awakened their expectation, and directed their eyes towards this great event. Whether God descended upon the flaming mountain, or spake by the prophet’s voice — whether he scattered his chosen people into captivity, or reassembled them in their own land, he was still carrying on a progressive plan, which was to be accomplished in the birth, life, and death of Christ.

The language of ancient prophecy upon this subject was magnificent, but seemingly contradictory. For it told of a Messiah who was to be at once a sufferer and a conqueror. The star was to come out by Jacob and the branch to spring from the stem of Jesse.— The angel of the covenant, the desire of all nations was to come suddenly to his temple and to him was to be the gathering of the people. Yet at the same time he was to be despised and rejected of men. And though he was to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, yet the **Gentiles** were to come to his light and Kings to the brightness of his rising. In the closing of the “Old Covenant” these prophetical riddles were solved — these seeming contradictions were reconciled. The obscurity of oracles and the ambiguity of types, vanished. The “Sun of righteousness” arose, and together with the dawn of religion, these shadows passed away. The law was abolished — the Gospel was introduced — the old dispensation was terminated and the new dispensation of religious knowledge and worship of peace on earth and good will to men was begun. In the language of the text, “every one that thirsted was invited to partake of the waters of life.”

The first lesson of a christian, is, to learn what the gospel is, and then exhibit to the world the practical effects of embracing it. Paul calls the "New Covenant" the Gospel of salvation. In whom ye trusted, (said he to the Ephesians) after ye have the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. It is denominated the gospel of peace,—of the grace of God :—that wisdom from above which is life-giving and spiritual — impartial in its effects, pure and gentle in its spirit, full of mercy and good fruits. This is the proper standard by which all doctrines must be tried. If any sentiment is offered for our approval and acceptance, we must examine it critically. If it is unmerciful — if it is partial or unjust, it is not the pure doctrine which is represented in the text by water, wine and milk. If it does not satisfy the inquiring mind — if it does not fill the soul that is hungering and thirsting after righteousness — the bread and water of celestial life, it is of earthly origin, and like all things terrestrial it appeaseth not the cravings of the spirit.

Pure christianity is universal in its design and effects, like the refreshing showers which water alike the fields of the just and the unjust, being evidence of the goodness of the

Creator. The religion of the gospel is the heartfelt and practical imitation of the perfections of God ; and that view of it which, in the imitation of Him, is the least PARTIAL and cruel, and the most engaging and benevolent, being the best for the world must be the most uncorrupted and genuine. Fine spun speculations are not necessary to make this truth apparent, nor can they obscure it. It is one of those truths with which controversy may have little to do. Plain in itself, its practice makes it the more obvious, and seals its claim to the approbation and favor of all candid and truly christian minds.

If religion were a mere shadow — a form — a sound, it would not deserve the burning thoughts which men bestow upon it. My view of religion is, that it is a resemblance of God in his brightest perfections — is consisting in a goodness which seeks to direct all events and all power to the production of good, as requiring the growth and boundless expansion of a principle already within. By its possession and expansion man becomes like his Maker filled with his love, interested in his objects, and devoted to his will. Animated with this spirit, the christian is a fol-

lower of Christ, not merely by believing in his name, but by the possession of his spirit.

The sentiment of the text shadows forth the principles of the gospel, which is a transcript of the nature of God. There is a certain spirit in the language made use of by the sacred writers, in representing Christianity which reaches the hearts of believers, and instills therein the pure principles of the gospel. All the duties of life, and every virtue which may tend to lighten the burthens of time, and assuage the pangs of grief, it inculcates and cherishes. Every inordinate passion in the human breast is repressed by the influence of this spirit, and man is prepared for the enjoyments of life. Its great end is to punish sin and bring the enslaved children of men into the glorious liberty of the children of Gcd. The Deity, from the great love he had for his offspring, sent his Son to testify of those great truths which will inspire that hope and confidence in their Creator, which will destroy all fear, and produce love and veneration for his character. These principles among others are exhibited in the text; they are like water, wine and milk, to the thirsty and weary traveller, in the journey of life.

The truth of them is written with sunbeams upon the pages of the volume of Nature, and are manifested in the bounties of Providence. Every true christian, of every name and sect under the arch of heaven, will acknowledge their influence and their power. Go, ask the the newly regenerated heart, what feelings they produce in the hour of deliverance, and he will tell you that his soul yearns for the deliverance of every human being from the bondage of sin and moral death, into the liberty of spiritual light, life and love. An important question here presents itself, and the only answer that can be given to it strikes the blow of death to every partial system in christendom.

Will the love of God when shed abroad in our souls produce this feeling if it is contrary to his will and design? *Most assuredly it will not!! The moral obligations and duties of man, which are written as with the pencil of heaven, upon his heart, answer, no!* It seems to be a just principle implanted in the bosom of every man that the common nature and condition of our species — their mutual wants and equal dependence involve the necessity of the exercise of universal charity. Man feels that *he should* recognize his fellows as

his brethren—possessing claims to his generosity and forbearance. This principle is so early imbibed and matured, that all acknowledge it to be a duty incumbent upon every man and every woman, to love one another. This disposition being exercised, they are led on to seek the welfare of those within the circle of their influence, and when their sphere of action ends, to extend the wide wish of felicity to the whole human family. Nothing short of this can satisfy that inward informer, who, ever listening, knows the secrets of our minds and minutes down to our own confusion every disposition we imbibe that serves to restrain our benevolence. Now, why is it that we *know it* to be our duty to love our species and to regard their welfare? It is because we are sensible that in doing thus we secure the approbation of God and imitate his doings.

I have often thought (says an early defender of our faith,) that the character of God might be learned from the irresistible convictions of man, concerning what *is* and what is *not* his duty to perform. Perhaps it might not always be true, but so far as the primary convictions go, it always will. Are we required to do *good to all*? It is because God is good to all. *Is it our duty to have mercy upon all?* The

reason is obvious. God's tender mercies are over all his works, and they endure forever. Are we commanded to love our friends—*our enemies*? It is because God is love. There never could have been a conviction in man that he was under any obligation to love his fellow creatures did it not originate in God. Man never would have been required to love *his enemies* did not God love *his also*, for no stream can rise higher than its fountain. If God then be love, if he love—if he loves all the creatures of his care—if he desires their welfare, what power on earth or power in heaven can defeat his purposes or separate his affections? God's grace or favor is represented in the scriptures by a river—the river of the waters of life—the waters of salvation. The Psalmist speaks of a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God; and the prophet in the earnestness of his zeal and the fullness of his soul, invites every one that thirsteth to come to the waters and drink—without money and without price.

“Thy goodness, Lord our souls confess,
Thy goodness we adore ;
A spring whose blessings never fail,
A sea without a shore.”

I have said that the first duty of a chris-

tian, is to learn what the gospel is, and then exhibit to the world the effects of embracing it. The Gentiles received the principles of the gospel, and were glad. We are informed of this truth, by the apostle, and it is what might have been expected, for it was intended to fill the hearts of believers with joy and peace; there is no case or condition to which it will not apply; it teems with the glories of heaven, and bespeaks the immortal felicity of the whole human race.

There are many systems propagated under the name of Gospel truth, which are the reverse of this, and which produce almost any other fruits, and bare with them almost any other spirit than that of the Gospel. Many of my readers can undoubtedly attest to the truth of this statement. Sorrow of heart, is the legitimate consequence of an erroneous faith. It torments the soul, and is the source of much of the sufferings of a sinful world. Perhaps the human heart may be so trained and influenced, as to derive satisfaction from the possession of false views of God and his government; but it must proceed from a heart whose affections are deeply corrupted. Habits of thinking may be acquired, which will exert a most pernicious influence upon

the judgment. Being creatures of education, we may be brought to a condition in which our natural affections will be inactive, and our moral feelings corrupt. I know of instances in which persons, naturally susceptible of fine impressions and noble feelings, have become so changed from what they were, to what they ought not to be, as to anticipate the inexpressible misery of their fellow creatures in a world without end, with complacency. But there never was a natural, unsophisticated feeling, or benevolent heart, but rejoiced on hearing the principles of the Gospel carried out to their legitimate conclusions.

The Gospel is a message of good tidings from a far country, and is like cold water to a thirsty soul ; and the invitation of the Gospel, " Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come, receive wine and milk, without money and without price," is truly soothing and heart-cheering ; it gladdens, comforts, consoles, renews and sanctifies the soul. That the truths of the Gospel have the power of awakening an intense moral feeling in men, under every variety of character, learned or ignorant, civilized or savage ; that they make

bad men good, and send a pulse of healthful feeling through all the domestic, civil, and social relations ; that they teach men to love right, to hate wrong, and to seek each other's welfare, as the children of one common parent ; that they control the baleful passions of the human heart ; that they teach men to aspire after a conformity to a Being of infinite holiness, and fill him with hopes infinitely more purifying — more exalting — more suited to his nature, than any other which this world has ever known ; are facts incontrovertible as the laws of philosophy or the demonstrations of mathematics. We see the proofs of this, everywhere around us. There is scarcely a neighborhood in our country, where the Bible is circulated, and the Gospel, in its purity, preached, in which we cannot point you to a very considerable portion of its population, whom its truths have reclaimed from the practice of vice, and taught the practice of whatsoever things are pure and honest, and just, and of good report.

Wherever the doctrines of the Savior have been carried home to the understanding of men, the aspect of society is altered. The frequency of crime is diminished ; men begin to love justice and a virtuous public opinion

— that strongest safeguard of right — spreads over a people the shield of its invisible protection.

The blessings of the Gospel are free and universal ; the spiritual feast is provided for all, and in the fullness of time's intellectual creation, shall partake thereof, and be satisfied. With God, there is plenteous redemption. Christ will reign and conquer, until every sinner shall be washed and made holy, through his blood. All the energies of Omnipotence are being put forth to accomplish this sublime purpose.

“The dwellers on the rocks, and in the vale,
Shout to each other ; and the mountain tops
From distant mountains, catch the sounding joy ;
'Till nation after nation, taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosanna round.”

It matters not how dark, stupid, or immoral men may have been. Though spell-bound by heathenish or Mahometan delusion ; conscience-bound by superstition or bigotry ; they shall listen to the teachings of the Savior, and every spell shall be broken ; every chain and fetter burst from every mind ; and man, towering to his native skies, shall go forth, conquering and to conquer, till the inhabitants of the whole earth shall drink of

the waters of life, be renewed and renovated in spirit, and become willing subjects of the Redeemer's kingdom. The beauty of heaven is spread around us; we are in the great store-house of God; there is food for the mind, as well as the body; and, if we are wise, we shall approach the well of everlasting life, and drink thereof, that we may never thirst again.

We should not, like the prodigal, stray from our Father's house, vainly imagining there is peace and quietness in the road to ruin; for, ere long, we shall awake from those flattering dreams, and behold everything tottering around us; we shall discover that we are standing upon the edge of a precipice, and the ground sliding from beneath our feet. But rather let us throw ourselves upon the mercies of God, and consecrate our lives to religion and virtue. Then shall we, under the blessings of heaven, be as the shining light which shineth more and more, unto the perfect day. Then shall we resemble those celestial fires which glow above, with beneficent, regular and permanent lustre.

In the foregoing discourse, I have attempted to exhibit the principles of the Gospel,

and the effects resulting from imbibing their spirit ; how well I have succeeded, I leave my readers to judge ; I rest on the belief that “the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joys upon their heads ;” that they shall come into the enjoyment of those rich blessings which God hath promised in the covenant of his grace, even “life forevermore ;” that, that which caused us trial, shall yield us triumph ; that which was the deeper darkness, shall be but the brighter light ; that which made the heart ache, shall fill it with gladness ; that tears shall be wipped away, and the beamings of joy shall come in their place ; that God, who has walked in the mysterious way, with clouds and darkness round about him, will then appear as the great Revealer ; and that he will reveal what “the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart conceived.” I close as I commenced : “Ho ! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters ; and he that hath no money, come, and eat ; come, receive wine and milk, without money and without price.”

AMEN.

P R A Y E R .

ALMIGHTY GOD ! Sovereign of the universe, who swayest thy sceptre over animate and inanimate objects, we desire to acknowledge with unfeigned gratitude our dependence on Thee for all our enjoyments, temporal and spiritual ; especially for thine inestimable love manifested in the plan of redemption through thine only begotten Son. We beseech thee, Oh Lord, to give us a due sense of all Thy mercies, that we may shew forth Thy praises, not only with our lips, but in our lives. We would desire to bow before Thee with humility and contrition of heart, being sensible of our proneness to iniquity and our numerous imperfections. What shall we render unto Thee for all thy benefits ? We will take the cup of salvation, and call upon Thy name. Vouchsafe unto us Thine aid, and enable us to lay hold of all the Christian graces, and find in the possession — in the enjoyment of Christian privileges, and in the performance of Christian duties an abundant reward. Thou hast provided a great feast for all people,

and hast invited us to come and partake thereof. Can sin with all its enchantments, can the world with all its allurements, offer anything equal to it? Oh God! awaken us to our true interest, and enable us to approach the "Fountain of life," and drink, that we may never thirst more. Save us from the deceitfulness of sin, and help us by Thy good spirit to choose that part which shall never be taken from us. Let holiness to the Lord be our motive every day of our lives, that we may so live that a faithful conscience shall never condemn us. May we be sanctified in body and spirit and thus be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. May we become wholly thine and be duly prepared for a better inheritance; and when we close our eyes upon the fading glories of earth, may we open them in the celestial paradise, to behold with unveiled face the glories of the Lamb who sits in the midst of the throne.

And to Thee shall be all the glory, world without end,

AMEN.

SERMON V.

GODLINESS MORE PROFITABLE THAN BODILY EXERCISE.

BY REV. L. P. RAND, ORONO.

I TIMOTHY, IV : 8.

"FOR BODILY EXERCISE PROFITETH LITTLE ; BUT GODLINESS IS PROFITABLE UNTO ALL THINGS, HAVING PROMISE OF THE LIFE THAT NOW IS, AND OF THAT WHICH IS TO COME."

THE ORDER in which I design to treat this subject, is,

First: to notice the phrase, bodily exercise.

Secondly: consider the term, Godliness.

Thirdly: show how Godliness has the promise of the life that now is ; and,

Fourthly: show in what sense Godliness has the promise of the life which is to come.

First: then, the phrase, bodily exercise, was evidently used by the Apostle in reference "to the gymnastic exercises among the Greeks, which were intended as a preparation for their contests at the public games. They did this in order to obtain a corruptible or fading crown, i. e., a chaplet of leaves which was the reward of those who conquered in those games. Timothy was to exercise himself unto Godliness, that he might be prepared for the kingdom of heaven; and there receive a crown that fadeth not away." These bodily exercises consisted in running, wrestling, boxing, throwing the quoit, &c. There is frequent reference to these games, in the epistolary writings of the New Testament. "Let us lay aside every weight, [saith the Apostle,] and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith."

Again: "Know ye not, that they which run in a race, run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery, is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I, therefore, so run, not as un-

certainly ; so fight I, not as he that beateth the air ; but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection ; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away."

Thus; the Apostle would so run, as certainly to gain the prize ; and not merely a chaplet of flowers, or corruptible and fading reward ; but an incorruptible and unfading crown. And, to this end, he prepared for the race ; watched over himself, and kept his body under subjection ; lest, after preaching to others, he himself should become a cast-away, i. e. an apostate. Not that he thus intimated the liability of his ultimate ruin, but his alienation from God ; his shipwreck of faith, and loss of the life and enjoyment of the Christian religion.

The house of Israel, were often cast away, but still, in God was their help. [See Hosea xiii. 9 ; Rom. xi. 15—36.] In those games, also, though all engaged in the contest, run, yet only one could win the prize. Not so in the Christian race ; all who run, may win. "They which run in a race, run all ; but one receiveth the prize ; so run, that ye may [all] obtain." To gain the prize, is to overcome the world, and gain that divine image

in which God dwells in us, and we in God. Those who seek for glory, and honor, and immortality, obtain eternal life now; this is a knowledge of God. "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." "And we know that the Son of God, is come, and hath given us our understanding, that we may know him that is true; and we are in him that is true, even in his Son, Jesus Christ." This understanding is the true God, and eternal life. [Rom. ii. 7. John xvii. 3. John v. 20.] All, therefore, who seek for glory, and honor, and immortality; who prepare for the Christian race—who run so as to win—who overcome the world—who gain the divine kingdom, and the sanctuary of God, and a knowledge of his name, put on immortality now by faith—obtain eternal life through faith, and win and wear the incorruptible and unfading crown of victory over sin, sorrow, and the grave.

It is plain, then, that "bodily exercise," or the exercise of those who strove for victory in the Olympic games, was of but little profit, when compared with the efforts of those, who, in the practice of Godliness, run the Christian race, and gain the

Christian crown. The efforts of the one were merely earthly ; and the reward was corruptible, perishable, fading. The efforts of the other, were heavenly, divine, and the crown of reward was incorruptible, imperishable, unfading ! And even, if we interpret the phrase “bodily exercise” according to its widest signification, it will still appear that what is mere “bodily exercise,” and consequently of the earth, earthy, is of very little profit compared with the exercises of the mind, and soul, and understanding ; these being the exercises in which we draw near to God, and gain a knowledge of His name, which knowledge, in truth, is immortality and eternal life ; and the only immortality and eternal life which we can now seek. The Saviour taught the same, saying, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.” Not that man can ascend to the regions of the upper worlds, now, and deposit a treasure there which he shall enjoy in eterni-

ty; but he can now lay up for himself the heavenly treasure, by cultivating the higher sensibilities of his soul, so that being brought nearer to God by the divine assimilation, he shall be capacitated to grasp and enjoy more of the heavenly inheritance.

Or, if we interpret the phrase “bodily exercise,” so as to embrace all the outward religious services of the world, it will still appear, on reflection, that such exercise comparatively profiteth little. For instance, the Mahometan, in his rigid rites; the heathen, in his tedious ceremonies and pilgrimages; the Hindoo, in his distressing attitude of penance; these all may derive little profit from their exercise; they may chasten and discipline their passions and emotions; in some measure, answer to a good conscience, and aid their apprehensions of a supreme Being. Or even if we embrace, by the phrase “bodily exercise,” all the ceremonies of heathen and Christian lands, which are not purely spiritual, it will be seen that they all have but little profit, compared with the exercise of the heart and soul, and understanding. No doubt, many well-meaning, religious persons, form very false conclusions on this matter; and set too high an estimation

upon the form, and too low an estimation upon the spiritual emotions of the heart. May we learn wisdom to discriminate between what is bodily or earthly, and that which is spiritual ; that in the exercise of the latter, our hearts may ever pray, and that we may thus be led to the enjoyment of our God.

Secondly : I am to consider the term "Godliness." This term, doubtless, embraces, in amount, all that is comprised in the Christian character. It is the same as godlikeness ; it is the great standard of purity, holiness and goodness, to which we conform, as we comply with the requisitions of the Divine moral law. It is the atmosphere of God. It is that spiritual frame of emotions, in which our souls harmonize with the Divine perfections. It is that cast of mind, in which we feel sensible of the Divine presence, and in which our souls realize a holy and heavenly commingling with that presence — a state in which all our highest spiritual aspirations are satisfied by that corresponding qualification which God has prepared, in the manifestation of his own nature, for the numerous spiritual wants of his offspring. This is what the scripture means by justi-

fication ; by being reconciled to God ; by "standing in the light, as God is in the light ;" and "being filled with all the fullness of God." In a practical sense, godliness is a conformity to the character of Him who "maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust ;" "who is kind to the unthankful and evil." The Apostle exhorts us to exercise ourselves unto godliness ; in which exercise, we are no longer conformed to this world, but are transformed, by the renewing of our minds, and prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. In this we gain the Divine sonship—become, characteristically, children of the Highest, and receive the sustaining, life-giving assurance that we are "heirs of God." And thus the scripture expresses the subject : "To the acknowledging of the truth which is after godliness." "Godliness, with contentment, is great gain." "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us unto glory and virtue." "And besides this, giving all diligence; add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge ; and to knowledge,

temperance ; and to temperance, patience ; and to patience, godliness ; and to godliness, brotherly kindness ; and to brotherly kindness, charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is plain, from the above, that godliness is that divine resemblance, in which we feel sensible that " God dwells in us, and we in God."

Thirdly: I am to show how godliness has the promise of the life that now is. This is evident from the fact that godliness is the divine resemblance ; and this resemblance, in its nature, is life, Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, because godliness is obedience to the divine moral law, which, in its spirit, is life. The wise man, speaking of the divine requisitions, says: "They are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh." The Psalmist has set forth the operations of the divine law, in bringing man to God, or to that divine assimilation in which he can enjoy God. "The law of the Lord, is perfect, converting the soul ; the testimony of the Lord, is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord, are *right*, rejoicing the heart. The command-

ment of the Lord, is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord, is clear, enduring forever; the judgments of the Lord, are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they, than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honey-comb. Moreover, by them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them, there is great reward." The sentiment before us, is abundantly confirmed in the Bible, in a very great variety of phraseology. Of wisdom, it is said, "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand, riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happy is every one that retaineth her." "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard, that went down to the skirts of his garments; as the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded his blessing, even life for ever more."

In the New Testament, this life is represented as being in Christ. Christ is the im-

age of God. He, in character, is the standard of life ; godliness, in all its perfection, centres in him. Hence, his image, which is godliness, or godlikeness, is the spiritual model of life—the model of our life ; and thus “Christ is our life.” He becomes our life, by imparting his righteousness ; that is, by communicating his own nature unto us. His forgiveness, his sympathy, his love, his goodness : in a word, his SPIRIT. When we are made partakers of this divine nature, we escape the corruptions that are in the world, through lust ; we are checked and subdued in our carnal dispositions and wicked propensities and habits ; and our souls are filled with those heavenly influences which direct our thoughts and aspirations in the way of purity, holiness, wisdom, life and peace ; and thus it is said, in reference to these operations of the spirit of Jesus : “I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless, I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.”

From all these considerations, it is plain that godliness has the promise of life in the present tense ; that it has the assurance of

life in this world — the present life — the life that now is. All that is meant by godliness, and all there can be of the Christian, is implied and embraced in the idea of believing on Christ. And it is written, “He that believeth on the Son of God, hath everlasting life.” Thus godliness — the righteousness of Christ — the divine moral image, has the stamp of life on its very features ; it is the true resemblance and model of life ; in fact, godliness is life — the vital living principle of spirituality in the soul.

But yet it is objected, by those who do not believe “there is a God who judgeth in the earth,” that there is not such a striking difference here between the righteous and the wicked ; and we are referred to the wealthy, the opulent, and proud, as prosperous and happy, in their sins, on the one hand ; and to the poor, the meek and the lowly, as destitute and miserable in their goodness, on the other hand, as proof that there is not a God who judgeth adequately in the earth ; and that there is not a manifest difference, as it respects retribution, between the righteous and the wicked in this life. A very plausible reference is also frequently made to the seventy-third Psalm, as if it were a sentiment

of the Bible, that the proud and ungodly were happy in this world. "Their eyes stand out with fatness," says the Psalmest; "and they have more than heart can wish. Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily, I have cleansed my heart in vain; and washed my hands in innocency; for all the day long have I been plagued and chastened every morning." Now it will not be denied, that the Psalmest states here, that the ungodly prosper; that they increase in riches; and he plainly intimates also that they were happy, even more happy than he himself, with all his piety. But this was not strictly true; and the Psalmest, in the next verse, himself corrects his statement. "If I say, I will speak thus," says he, "behold, I shall offend against the generation of thy children." It is true, plainly, that the wicked sometimes get riches, (though not so generally as the righteous); but that the wicked, the ungodly, are happy with their riches, does not follow. David says, "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely, thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down

into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment ! They are utterly consumed with terrors."

Thus David corrects himself in this matter. The truth is, he had been out of the sanctuary of God, himself, for a little while, and, during this time, he cherished some very false emotions and sentiments. But when he went into the sanctuary of God, again, he corrected himself. If he had not corrected himself, his testimony would have denied the words of our text, which says, "godliness has the promise of the life that now is." And not only so, but he would have denied his own words, in numerous instances; for nearly all his writing and sayings, prove that godliness has the promise of the life that now is. See the first Psalm: "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly; he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth, shall prosper. The ungodly are not so."

The triumph of the wicked, even when they do triumph, is not to be discerned; for they are aliens from God's sanctuary, and the way of peace, they have not known; their

joys are earthly, fading, fleeting. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." The Psalmist said he had been foolish as a beast, before God; that he had been envious at the wicked; but after gazing, in his foolishness, for a while, upon the wicked, he returned to the sanctuary of God; that is, to that state of divine assimilation to God, which is godliness; then he understood the end of the wicked. Not that they were to be annihilated, or consigned to endless pain, but the end of the wicked man or wicked nation, is to be punished. The wicked incur the retribution of God. This they bring upon themselves, by their wickedness, and it is inevitable. But this chastisement, correction, retribution, or punishment, is not the end of the man; though it is the end of the individual as a *wicked* man. The end of the wicked *man*, as such, is punishment. He incurs it, it is certain; and however he may calculate to get clear, this is his end as a wicked man. But God punishes his children, to reform them; his punishment can be designed for nothing else; and when his punishments shall

have done their perfect work, then he will restore his offspring to his own image ; to the state of godliness, by the power of his grace. All this, his love is pledged to do.

From the above remarks, it is certain that ungodliness is the state of death, and that godliness is the state of life, or that divine assimilation to God, which has the promise of the life that now is. Reader, will you try to seek that state ?

Fourthly : I am to show how godliness has the promise of the life which is to come.

This follows from the fact that godliness is the same in all places, and in all worlds. Godliness being the divine image — the element of life — it has the promise of life in all places and in all worlds. I know our text is sometimes adduced to prove that those, and those only, who are godly in this life, will be happy in the next. But such is not the testimony of the Bible, much less of this text. Such a sentiment is not even intimated in the text ; nor are we anywhere certified that we shall have life even one week hence, because we are godly now. We are nowhere certified that we shall have life next month, because we are godly this month. No, but the assurance is, that if we would have life next

month or next year, we must be godly next month or next year. Nor are we anywhere certified that we shall have life in the next world, because we are godly in this world. Godliness is the element or state of life, and the assurance is, that we must be godly in the next world, in order to have life in the next. Godliness has the promise of life now; it has the promise of life next week, next month, next year, and in the next world. Wherever godliness is, there is life; and thus godliness has the promise of life in all places. The man who is godly to-day, may sin and turn aside from the divine character and image, to-morrow; then he has death; and his godliness is not remembered. Hence, the godliness of to-day, does not necessarily give life to-morrow; the man must be godly to-morrow, in order to have life to-morrow; and he must be godly in the next world, also, in order to enjoy life in the next world; and in this view only, has godliness the promise of the life which is to come.

If it now be asked, what assurance we have that all will have life in the next world? I answer, the assurance that all shall be made godly in that world. That all shall be made thus pure and holy and godly, and, conse-

quently happy in the next world, I could adduce great proof from the Bible; although it will not be expected that I shall make such effort now. It does not properly belong to this discourse. Nor have I space to present it. Let it suffice to say, here, that "The Lord God will wipe away every tear from off all faces." [Isa. xxv: 8.] And that, "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." [I Cor. 15: 22.] What a testimony! Surely, such a hope is worth many thousand worlds like this! But, kind reader, I must take my leave of you, now; and, while I believe, without a shadow of a doubt, that God, through Christ, will subdue the world unto himself, and crown it blest in the kingdom of immortality, allow me to entreat you to seek the divine image now, as it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.

AMEN.

P R A Y E R .

O ! THOU that rulest in heaven, may Thy name be hallowed above every name ; and may Thy kingdom come, and Thy will be done, on earth. We bow before Thee, believing that Thou art worthy, O ! Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power ; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure, they are, and were created. With the myriads round the throne, we, Thy creatures, Thy offspring on earth, would offer unto Thee the tribute of gratitude and thanksgiving for life and all its joys. While we would pray for the accomplishment of the divine purpose, we rejoice in the assurance that Thou doest Thy will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. And that Thou reignest ; that the heavens do rule. O ! let the earth rejoice ; let the inhabitants thereof, be glad ; let the floods clap their hands, and the mountains and hills be joyful together. O ! Lord, Thou art not limited in power and goodness ;

as Thou hast designed, therefore, in the plenitude of Thy wisdom and love, so let it come to pass. Thou fillest all space, and art necessarily with us now. O ! make us sensible of Thy presence ; and teach us to feel and return Thy love.

All time is present with Thee ; Thou art from everlasting to everlasting ; yea, Thou inhabitest eternity ! Thou seest the shades of evil that streak Thy purposes ; and Thou seest, also, in the consummation of Thy overruling goodness, the floods of everlasting light and glory that rise in the unbounded distance beyond. Give us a clear view of Thy character, and a correct understanding of Thy truth, that, in the exercise of faith, we may enjoy that hope and that inheritance, which Thou hast given to the world, through Thy Son, our Lord. O ! Father, may we look to Thee, through Him, and be saved ; for we feel that we have often turned aside from wisdom's ways, and pierced ourselves through with sorrows ; surely, we have constant need of Thy cleansing, healing, and sustaining grace. Remember Thy great mercy towards sinners ; Thou seest their state, as they oppose Thy wise government ; strive with their Maker, and, in the mad-

ness and phrenzy of their own vain imaginations, tear the fibres of their souls ; cherishing within them those evil spirits, which, like vultures of darkness, pray upon their vitals. O ! God, in the midst of wrath, remember mercy ; breathe forth Thy quickening spirit ; make Thy forgiveness known ; and grant repentance unto life, through our Lord Jesus Christ. Sprinkle, we pray Thee, the nations, as with the dews of heaven ; cleanse Thy heritage, that Thy people, everywhere, may cast their idols to the bats and to the moles, and, by the angel of Thy presence, enjoy Thy excellent loving-kindness.

In the depths of Thy compassion, Lord, do Thou remember the sons and daughters of affliction, and comfort all that mourn ; give unto them beauty for ashes, and the oil of heavenly joy, for all their sorrows. Bless, we pray Thee, every measure and movement that shall be laudably directed to the promotion of Thy truth ; revive Thy work in the midst of these years ; and cause that the efforts of Thy people, may be the means, in Thy hands, through which Thou shalt fill the earth with Thy glory, according to Thy will.

Prepare us all to confess and reverence Thy name ; lead us in green pastures, and

by still waters; give us, day by day, our daily bread, and an unction from the Holy One, that we may do Thy will; grant us that charity which thinketh no evil, that we all may be one in Christ Jesus, and that the world may believe that thou hast sent him. Fill our days with usefulness and peace. And when time, in its winged flight, shall have sped, O! then, may we lean our weary heads on Thee, our Father and our God, who shall receive our spirits unto Thyself, and clothe them with immortality, in those realms where we shall mingle with the departed, and join with every creature in heaven, earth and sea, in rendering unto Thee homage, praise, and power, amid those brilliant constellations, which glow forever throughout Thine own ineffable immensity! And unto Thee, through Jesus Christ, would we render ascriptions of everlasting praise, world without end!

AMEN.

SERMON VI.

THE RELIGION OF CHRIST— A TREASURE.

BY REV. N. GUNNISON, HALLOWELL.

MATTAEW XIII: 44.

“ AGAIN: THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS LIKE UNTO TREASURE HID IN A FIELD, THE WHICH, WHEN A MAN HATH FOUND, HE HIDETH, AND, FOR JOY THEREOF, GOETH AND SELLETH ALL THAT HE HATH, AND BUYETH THAT FIELD.”

BY THE phrase, “kingdom of heaven,” in this passage, we are undoubtedly to understand the Gospel dispensation; a kingdom, the establishment of which, was one principal object of the mission of the Son of God. It evidently signifies the religion of Jesus Christ — the “glorious Gospel of the blessed God,” which was communicated to the world by a Messenger from heaven; and is

fitly called a kingdom, over which Christ is appointed to rule, till all the kingdoms of this world, shall be destroyed, and all enemies subdued under his feet.

The introduction, progress, and ultimate triumph of this kingdom, was a subject of prophecy from the time God communicated himself to Abraham, to the time when Christ came to actualise the prophetic vision ; and to usher in the long looked for day which should give birth to a new kingdom.

Isaiah, speaking prophetically of the extent of this kingdom, declared that it should "have no end." Daniel compared it to a "stone cut out of the mountain, without hands," which, by its increasing power, should "break in pieces all other kingdoms," and ultimately fill the whole earth. The Savior, speaking of its commencement, and the manner of its increase, illustrates it by the mustard seed, which is one of the smallest of seeds ; but, when deposited in the ground, its germ is unfolded, and the little blade shoots forth, which, by the continual action of the sun and the earth, sends out its branches, and becomes, by a slow and gradual growth, a great plant, which casts its shade far and near. In speaking of its value to

mankind, he represented it under the figure of a valuable treasure hid in a certain field, which, when a man had found, he went and sold all that he had, and purchased that field, that he might possess the treasure.

The evident design of Christ, in putting forth this parable, was to portray the exceeding great value and importance of the Gospel kingdom, which is established upon the principles of eternal right and truth, and secures joy and peace to every loyal subject; and, also, the wisdom and expediency of parting with all our dearly cherished, earthly treasures, in order to secure this one “pearl of great price.” By this figure, however, we are not to understand that the riches of the Gospel can be bought and sold like the fluctuating and perishable treasures of this world; but that, in contrast with this, all things else are of comparative insignificance; and, that, to obtain this, should be our first and principal object. The same idea is often expressed in the parables of our Savior. In the verse following my text, the Gospel is likened unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he found one of great value, went and sold all that he had, and *bought it.*

The instructive lesson here taught, is, that the religion of Christ, is of more importance than any worldly concerns ; and, hence, should receive our highest attention. The direct instructions of Christ, are, " Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all other things shall be added unto you."

This idea that is so often expressed in the parables of our Savior, and in the epistles of Paul, James, and John, that the religion of Christ is the richest treasure ever within the reach of mortals, has generally obtained in the human mind. Nearly every individual in the Christian community, will acknowledge the importance of this religion, and the necessity of a personal possession of this treasure. On all hands are sinners exhorted to " seek the kingdom of heaven ; " " to search for this treasure ; " " to sell all, and purchase this pearl of great price."

That there are many vague and inconsistent ideas entertained in relation to the nature and principles of the religion of Christ, will not be denied ; and, that sinners are often presented with improper motives to induce them to search for the hidden treasure of truth, is obvious to every mind. But, I will not stop here to specify and point out

the erroneous and absurd ideas which have obtained, relative to this subject, in a considerable portion of the Christian church; neither will I dwell long upon the practical error of urging considerations of extraneous penalty and reward, to secure an attention to this, of all, the most important subject. It is my present purpose to notice some of the intrinsic excellencies of that moral system which is represented by an inestimable treasure; and, in doing this, it may not be out of place, briefly to allude to the erroneous and unscriptural notions which are entertained relative to this subject; neither would it be improper to urge a rejection of all doctrines and principles which claim Divine origin, that are not in harmony with nature, and approved of by enlightened reason.

The value of Christianity, or of any other system, whether of religion or morals, is to be determined by its adaptedness to our wants, and its practical influence upon our lives. A system of religion which should consist in forms and ceremonies only, could be of no possible value to any one. And, if an extraneous reward was promised, or penalty threatened, in order to secure an observance of those forms and rites, even then,

there could be no real value attached to such a system, for it would contain none of the essential elements of purity and virtue. There would be nothing in such a system which could reach the affections and purify the life. The consideration of an extraneous reward, may regulate the outward conduct, in some degree. It has done it, in many instances ; but, it can never regulate the individual principles of the soul ; it has no power over the conscience, and can never elevate the mind ; neither can the fear of punishment operate upon the heart so as to purify it from all evil desires and wicked purposes. It will restrain the passions, and hold back the hand of cruelty and oppression, but it will tend rather to corrupt than to purify the fountain of life.

The bending subjects of the haughty king of Babylon, were truly no more obedient to his unrighteous law, than were those who refused to fall down and worship the image which he had erected. By fear of the cruel penalty, they were kept from open rebellion, and bent the knee in apparent submission to the expressed will of their king ; but to say that, in their outward acts of obedience, there was any sincere loyalty, would be a libel

upon our race. Man is not capable of being so grossly depressed, as to render willing obedience to an unjust and cruel oppression ; neither is he capable of being so perverted in all his faculties as to be made better by the fear of some cruel punishment. His whole nature is adverse to such influence, and they tend only to corrupt and deprave his heart. This assertion is not based upon mere supposition. The history of the race, contains volumes of testimony to its correctness. The philosophy of the human mind, demonstrates its truth. It is indeed, a truth so obvious, that the observing need no arguments to convince them of its reality. No great value, then, can be attached to any system of religion, which has reference to outward forms and ceremonies, to which it secures obedience, by considerations of extraneous rewards and punishments, inasmuch as such a system tends to deprave, instead of elevating and purifying man. Neither can there be great value attached to a system which has reference to a future blotting out of sins only — a mere scape-goat religion, which loads our sins off upon an innocent person, and secures pardon for us, at the expense of justice.

Such a religion is worth but little, for it can never create in the heart right motives, nor satisfy the soul. All the indwelling principles of the heart — the inward consciousness of right and justice, are continually rising up in opposition to this transfer of sins from the guilty to the innocent! If the religion of Christ has reference to another world, principally ; and, bases all our hopes of heaven, upon the sufferings of Jesus, as our vicar ; if its duties are enjoined with reference to a reward in another state of existence only ; if it is merely a revelation of an uncertain, conditional plan of future pardon and salvation from punishment, it is a system of no practical value ; and, hence, is not correctly represented under the figure of an inestimable treasure. If such be the doctrines of Christianity, it is but practical atheism ; for, it makes the destinies of men depend upon chance, and atheism does no more.

But, such is not the nature of the religion of Christ. True, his system extends into the future, and reveals the most sublime truths in relation to the immortal destiny of man ; but, this was not the only object of his mission. No ; his religion has reference to the present wants of man, and was designed to

feed his present desires, and regulate his motives as well as his conduct. It was designed to be a perfect rule of life, based upon the true nature of man ; containing within itself, every possible motive to obedience. It was communicated to man, because it was adapted to his wants, and calculated to direct all the rising and expanding energies of his nature : to awaken sublime conceptions in his mind, and to enkindle the fires of devotion in his soul ! It was designed to guide man through all the winding labyrinths of this life, and to open to his anxious soul, a fairer and more beautiful world beyond the tomb.

Its doctrines and its duties are such as reason approves, and nature, with her many voices, declares to be true and just.

Christ embodied the whole system in his own person, and demonstrated its principles in his life. In fact, to see and comprehend the religion of Christ, we have but to study and know the character of its great Founder. All of its principles were developed in Him. In one word, he was the perfect exponent of the great system which he came to establish !

The doctrine of a common brotherhood ; of an equal origin and destiny of our race, was the foundation of the whole system.

Upon this foundation, he reared a superstructure more glorious than the human mind had ever conceived of—a structure composed of living materials—a community whose interests and sympathies are one!

All the principles necessary to the completion of such a community, and all the duties devolving upon its individual members, were exhibited in his life. No single duty, however unimportant it may appear to us, was overlooked by him. He comprehended all time, and all the conditions of mankind ; and stood forth a perfect pattern for their imitation. No matter into what age we look, there Christ stands forth, not only the visible representative of the invisible, but, also, the complete exponent of all the principles and laws of that sublime system which God, through him, communicated to the world.

This system is not, as many teach, a mere devise by which to get to heaven ; and, sinners are not exhorted and urged to embrace Christ, as a mere expedient to escape an awful doom in another existence. Such a menial consideration, is never presented in the scriptures of truth ! No, never ! The religion of Christ, is a practical concern, de-

signed for man's present condition, to show him how to live.

We are creatures of this world, now ; and need wisdom and instruction, that we may avoid its evils, and secure its many blessings. We are ignorant and blind, and know not where our true happiness lies. Our rising wants impel us on continually, in search of pleasures ; but it is an undirected impulse, and may terminate in our ruin ! We feel obligations and responsibilities resting upon us ; but we know not how to discharge those duties. Conscience tells us to be right, and to do right ; but it explains not to us which is the right, and which the wrong. The heathen mother, following a blind impulse of her better nature, does that which her conscience approves, when she violates every law of her being, by tearing from her bosom, her budding infant, and casting it into the river, to be devoured by frightful reptiles. The affectionate wife of the departed husband, follows the dictates of conscience, when she throws herself upon the burning pyre of her husband, or into the grave, to be buried alive with his dead body ! Her every principle of nature is violated, and every holy sympathy

of the heart, torn assunder and sacrificed to a blind conscience! The religion of Christ, is designed to teach them what is right, and to direct them in the way of duty, which is ever found to be in harmony with the laws of our own being. In fact, the religion of Christ, is but the exemplification and demonstration of the laws of our physical, moral, and intellectual natures. To follow Christ, as the practical exponent of all his principles and precepts, is but to obey all the laws of our three-fold natures—to develope the faculties of our bodies, minds, and souls.

A system which has reference to the expansion of all our energies, and develops to us the principles and laws of our own being, and practically teaches us how to obey them, is certainly a system which may fitly be called "a treasure." What would it not be worth to the heathen mother, as she is about to tear from her very heart its most precious jewel? It would tell her to clasp that precious infant in the arms of affection, and rear it with a mother's tenderness! It would tell her to watch its rising wants—to guide its youthful steps—to enjoy its society through a long life; and to look over upon the other side of the dark valley of death,

and behold there a continuation of those joys! What would not this religion be worth to the beloved wife, as she is about to tear herself away from all earthly endearments, and even from life itself? It would tell her to fill up the grave of her departed husband, with the rough sands which had been dug from it, and live herself, to plant the willow by its side to cast its shade over his sleeping dust.

To her, as she contemplates the keen tortures of the crackling flames which are to curl around her living body, at which all nature revolts, and the soul sickens, the assurance that duty did not demand so cruel a sacrifice, would fill her soul with inexpressible joy.

This assurance the religion of Christ would give her. Then, who can calculate the value which she would place upon it?

But, it is not to the unenlightened heathen alone that this religion is valuable. It is equally valuable to all men! It tells the Christian how to live! It shows the sinner in his lowest degradation, how to arise, and return to virtue and peace! Christ is the living example—"the way, the truth, and the life." His life was a perfect development of all the duties and obligations which

rest upon man. Look at him, then, as your practical teacher in all things ; view him in every act and in every word, and you see perfectly illustrated the laws of your own being !

What value, then, can we place upon this system of religion, which he communicated to the world? What treasure shall it be likened unto? It is a priceless thing ! It is adapted to the wants of man under every circumstance of life ! It lays no burdens upon his shoulders! It imposes upon him no restraints which his own good does not require ! Its duties are such as are connected immediately with his own happiness ! He is required to love God supremely, and his neighbor, as he loves himself. This is his whole duty ; and, in performing this duty, he is only following the impulses of his own soul. He is only doing that which his own best good demands ! He is developing the inborn energies of his own soul ! The details of this law are specified in the whole history of Christ's life. "He went about doing good" — relieving the distressed — comforting the afflicted, and speaking peace to troubled consciences !

Such is the religion of Christ practically.

It contemplates the whole race as one great family of like interests and sympathies ; and as such, directs each member in the discharge of its individual duty. It is the perfect rule of life. "It sanctions no wrong or injustice. It allows no fraud or deceit, but requires man to deal justly — to love mercy and to walk humbly with God ; to visit the fatherless and the widow in their afflictions, and to keep unspotted from the world." No roar and bloodshed can exist when this religion prevails. No strife and hatred can rage in bosoms, touched by the power of heaven's appointed king !

Peace, unity and love among all men — harmony and sympathy and fellow feeling must exist where the religion of Christ is embraced in its fullest extent ! This is the perfect state to which we are capable of attaining, and to which this system of grace contemplates bringing us.

But, it is not only the rule of human conduct, and the practical director of the native impulses of our souls as it respects our duty to our fellow-men, but, it reveals great and sublime truths concerning God and his government over us.

It communicates to the longing soul the

knowledge of its high origin and destiny. It reveals God as the Father of all ; and heaven as the home of all. It communicates to the mind of earth's weary pilgrim, the most cheering views of God's purposes in the creation of man. It opens heaven to his anxious soul as the ultimate destination of our race : and bids him be reconciled to all the dark and mysterious allotments of providence, assuring him that though darkness is round about the throne of God, yet justice and mercy are the attributes of his character, and that all his judgments are executed in love !

Such is the religion of Christ practically and doctrinally ; and is it not correctly called a treasure of inestimable value ? It is adapted to the wants of man in every condition of life. To the rich and poor — the high and low — the free and the oppressed — it furnishes a never failing source of consolation, and fills the believing and obedient soul with joy and peace !

In conclusion, I would urge upon you, my respected hearers, the importance of securing this treasure, even though it be at the cost of wealth, honor and fame ! It is the one thing needful — the wisdom and consola-

tion of life! Seek for it, then, as for hidden treasures, and it will be your counsellor in life—your comfort in affliction, and your hope in death. AMEN.

PRAYER.

OUR FATHER which art in heaven, we reverence Thy name above all names, for Thou art the great and the Holy One, who inhabitest eternity—the Creator of all worlds—the Fountain of all life—the Father of the spirits of all flesh, and the giver of every good and every perfect gift. Help us to come before Thee, as we ought, with our hearts imbued with Thy love, and our souls full of the consciousness of our entire dependence on Thee for life and for every needed blessing—that our spirits may be lifted on high, and we may feel that we are worshiping our God in the beauty of holiness.

Thou hast given unto us Thy blessed Son,

and by Him, that precious Gospel, which is, indeed, an invaluable treasure. Oh! Lord, receive our unfeigned thanks for the same; and enable us, in all the dispensations of Thy Providence, to cherish its precious Faith and its sustaining Hope. Oh! may its Faith work by love, in all our hearts, and its Hope prove to be as an anchor to our souls, both sure and steadfast, causing us to rejoice in the blissful assurance of another and a better world, where God, with his own hand, shall wipe away tears from off all faces; where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

Help us to rejoice continually before Thy face, and to do the whole duty of the sincere Christian; to be constant in season and out of season; to visit the widow and fatherless; to raise up the bowed down; to relieve the afflicted; and to do justly; love mercy, and walk humbly before God; that our hearts may be at rest, and that we may realize, by experience, the truth of the declaration of Thy inspired servant, "Great peace have they who love Thy law, and nothing shall offend them.

And now, Father, we commit ourselves to

140 PRAYER BY REV. N. GUNNISON.

Thy supreme direction ; and our only desire is, what wilt Thou have me to do? Give us wisdom from on high, to direct us aright ; and light to shine in upon our pathway, that we may see clearly our duty. Forgive all our sins, and ultimately save us with an everlasting salvation, together with a ransomed universe, through Jesus Christ, the Redeemer.

AMEN.

SERMON VII.

SUBJECTION TO THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT.

BY REV. J. P. ATKINSON, WESTBROOK.

HEBREWS XII: 9.

“FURTHERMORE, WE HAVE HAD FATHERS OF OUR FLESH,
WHO CORRECTED US, AND WE GAVE THEM REVERENCE;
SHALL WE NOT MUCH RATHER BE IN SUBJECTION UNTO
THE FATHER OF SPIRITS, AND LIVE?”

THE AUTHOR of our text, was possessed of a very different spirit and feeling, when he advanced the beautiful sentiment which it breathes forth, than when denying the Lord that bought him—ridiculing the Christian religion, and manifesting an implacable hostility toward all those who believed in, and were governed by, the glorious principles of Chris-

tianity. Led on by a zeal "not according to knowledge," St. Paul, before his conversion, exerted every faculty that he possessed, to destroy the followers of the Son of God. He caused the defenceless and harmless to be bound in chains, and thrust into damp and dismal dungeons, for their attachment to the blessed Redcemer of the world. Having long made havoc of the church of Christ, he had persuaded himself with the vain expectation that he should entirely destroy it. Obtaining letters and authority from the chief priests, he proceeded to Damascus, under the influence of the most malignant passions, to put the detestible purpose which he had formed, into execution. But while on his way to that devoted city, the paradise on earth, as the Orientals designate it, a glorious light from heaven, far outshining the splendor of the sun, suddenly burst upon him, carrying conviction to his benighted understanding, and plainly exhibiting the enormity of the enterprize in which he was engaged. He was prostrated to the earth; the rebuking voice of that Jesus whom he had so cruelly persecuted, in his humble followers, reaches his ear; it was a voice that completely disarmed this proud and self-righteous Phari-

see. "Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?" was the gentle voice which saluted his ear, in strains of persuasive eloquence. He was constrained to listen to the persecuted Redeemer. He answered mildly and calmly, "Who art thou, Lord?" The Savior replied, "I am Jesus of Nazareth, whom thou persecutest."

Conviction was now forced upon his mind. His persecuting disposition was removed; his soul was melted to conviction and love; and instead of burning with mad zeal to arrest the progress of the Christian religion, and exterminate the disciples of the Lord of life and glory, he raised his soul to heaven, and sincerely and ardently prays, "Lord, what is it thou wouldest have me to do?"

He was directed to proceed onward to Damascus, where he would be properly instructed in relation to the mind and will of Jehovah, concerning his future life, and in the doctrine of which he was destined to be an able defender.

Arriving at Damascus, "One Ananias, a devout man, according to the law, having a good report of all the Jews, who dwelt there, came to him, and said, brother Saul, receive thy sight. And he said, the God of our fa-

thers, hath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his will, and see that Just One, and shouldest hear the voice of his mouth. For thou shalt be his witness unto all men, of what thou hast seen and heard. Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord."

He remained with the disciples of the Lord, at Damascus, for a long period of time, declaring the unsearchable riches of the sun of righteousness, and promulgating the cheering truth that Christ is the true Mesiah, and "Savior of the world." He became subject to the Father of spirits, and henceforth rolled onward with an energy and power in the cause of his Divine Master, which knew no parallel. He was borne forward, unwearied and undismayed; while his only support and hope was in that despised Savior, whom once he persecuted; his only employment, to spread wide abroad the knowledge of his love; his only object, "to bring men to an acknowledgement of Divine truth;" while he rejoiced in looking beyond this transitory state of existence, for an inheritance incorruptible and fadeless.

St. Paul was indefatigable in his exertions to disseminate gospel truth, and to impress

upon mankind the duties obligatory upon them. Hence, he declared, in the language of the text: "Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?" This appears to be the argument of the apostle. If fathers chastise their children, and are at the same time deserving of their reverence, with how much *more* propriety should we observe the wise and holy commands of our heavenly Father; be in subjection to the Almighty, who chastises not for His pleasure, but for our profit, that we may be partakers of his Divine nature, and become the recipients of spiritual life and joy? Several important and cogent reasons may be adduced, why, as rational and intelligent creatures, we should become subject to the government of God. And,

First: Because He is our Father.

No matter how disobedient the children of men may be, it does not destroy the relationship existing between them and the Holy One. If that relationship was entirely broken up, and mankind become the children of the arch deceiver, they would be under no obligations to reverence the great Jehovah,

and be subject to His righteous laws. But, as before stated, that relationship cannot be annulled. Though they wander from their Father's house, in which there is bread enough and to spare; though they may not give heed to His commandments, and are sunken in the lowest depths of degradation, yet that relationship in which we stand to the Deity, cannot be dissolved. This cheering and beautiful truth is exemplified by that interesting and affecting story of the prodigal son, which the Redeemer spake to the publicans and sinners. This son took his portion, and left the home of his youth. He soon became corrupt and wretched. His licentious habits reduced him to penury and want. In his distressed and friendless situation, he thought of home and its endearments; he thought of his honored parent. What were his words, when he reflected on his forlorn situation? "I will arise," he exclaimed, "and go to my father!" In the midst of his wickedness, and even while far from home, he had a father. And while returning to the land of his youth, his father saw him a *great way off*. He immediately recognized him as his son. The moment he beheld him, love, ardent and unconquerable

ble love—love which many waters cannot quench, nor floods drown, hastened him to his child, to welcome him home. As soon as the opportunity presented itself, the father stretched forth his arms, and fondly embraced him, fell on his neck, and kissed him again and again ; and while his heart was beating with unspeakable joy, and while the son was overwhelmed with anguish, he exclaimed, “This *my son*, was dead, and is *alive* again ; was lost, and is found.” From this parable we are made acquainted with the fact that man is incapable of performing anything to nullify the connexion between him and his Creator ; and of the unconquerable love of God. Mankind, estranged from the moral presence of the Deity, are supposed, by some, to have lost their relationship. The current theology, is, as expressed by the grave divines assembled at Westminister, that “man has lost the *image* of his Maker.” But the story to which I have just alluded, teaches the reverse of this. For, when the father beheld the son a great way off, he knew him ; he rushed toward him, and declared him to be, what his elder and self-righteous brother, would not allow, *his son*.

Thus are we justified in declaring that

mankind are the children of the Most High, throughout all changes in their character and circumstances. And hence, Jehovah addressed every intelligent being, saying, "Son, give me thine heart." By the treatment which the father bestowed upon the erring and sinful child, of whom mention is made in the parable, and in the above declaration of the Holy One, we are enabled to learn the strength of the Creator's love for his offspring, and his willingness to bestow upon them all needful blessings.

In our wanderings, our heavenly Father beholds us with complacency, and corrects us, that we may become subject to his authority, and enjoy that divine life which fills the soul with uninterrupted peace, and gives it a bright and enchanting view of that better world, where death shall be swallowed up in the victory of immortal life; tears wiped from every eye, and the world of mankind brought in subjection to the mild and peaceful government of God.

In the second place, we should become subject to the "Father of spirits," because his requirements are just, and by the observance of them, our happiness is enhanced.

Nothing can proceed from Him, but what

is perfectly proper; no requirement or command, but what is in accordance with perfect justice. A large portion of professed Christians, have strange and inconsistent ideas of the justice of Jehovah. Instead of declaring that his justice is but a branch or modification of his abundant mercy, they tell us that it is in direct opposition to it; and that, while heaven-born mercy strongly pleads for the welfare of the whole intelligent creation, the stern and unrelenting justice of God, demands that they should be delivered of every enjoyment upon the earth, and banished forever, to dwell in misery the most intense. For an idea so abhorrent to every benevolent feeling, there is not a particle of evidence in the inspired volume. Throughout the scriptures of truth, the justice of our heavenly Father is represented as being in accordance with his mercy, and striving for the happiness and well-being of his dependent offspring. It demands that every unholy desire, every rebellious emotion, that all the confusion of this world should come to a final termination, and joy and gladness fill every heart. The Divine Teacher said, in reply to a lawyer, who desired to be informed "which is the greatest commandment in the law?"

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it: thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. On these two commandments, hang all the law and the prophets.”

This is what strict and impartial justice demands. Instead of justice requiring that the children of men should be deprived of everything which is calculated to impart peace and happiness in this transitory state of existence, and be under the stern necessity of suffering endless punishment in the coming world, it requires them to become subject to the Creator, by exercising love toward Him, and also toward our neighbor. We are not to suppose, however, that he is our neighbor only, with whom we are personally acquainted, or who may reside near us, but all mankind may be considered, in a peculiar sense, our neighbor. The term “neighbor,” is a “comprehensive one, meaning any one with whom we have to do,” or who may stand in need of our assistance. The idea that all mankind are our neighbors, was in direct opposition to the sentiments that prevailed among the blinded Jews, in

relation to this subject. They believed that those only were neighbors, who embraced their religion. That they were not under any obligations to treat with kindness, those whom they considered as unbelievers. Hence, they said, "He who lived in idolatry, was the common enemy of all, and, as such, might be slain by any one." And Tacitus, a Roman historian, says, "The Jews hated all others as enemies." One declared, "A Jew sees a Gentile fall into the sea; let him by no means lift him out; for it is written, thou shalt rise up against the blood of thy neighbor; but this is not thy neighbor." Now Jesus showed that the views which were held by the Jewish people, on this point, were too contracted and selfish, in the beautiful story of the good Samaritan. In answer to the interrogation, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus said, "A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance, there came down a certain priest, that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise, a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on

the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow, when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. Which, now, of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbor unto him that fell among the thieves? And he said, he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, go, and do thou likewise."

We here learn that the Samaritan, although a stranger, doubtless to the person who fell among the thieves, was a neighbor to him, "in a very high and active sense of the term." And the lawyer, to whom this language was addressed, although he despised, with the rest of his countrymen, the Samaritans, was constrained to acknowledge that he who showed mercy to the wounded, suffering man, was the real neighbor. And let it never be forgotten, that that command is obligatory on all men to do likewise, as well as upon

the lawyer. Oh! that it may be deeply impressed upon all our hearts, that

“Our neighbor is the suffering man,
Though at the farthest pole.”

“Thy neighbor? It is he whom thou
Hast power to aid and bless;
Whose aching heart, or burning brow,
Thy soothing hand may press.

Where'er thou meet'st a human form,
Less favored than thine own,
Remember 't is thy *neighbor* worm,
Thy *brother*, or thy *son*.”

By attending to the Divine requirements, we are enabled to preserve a sacred composure, amid all the storms and sorrows of life; the sunshine of prosperity will illumine the soul; peace and happiness will surround our pathway, and we shall have a blessed foretaste of those perennial joys which emanate from the throne of the Great Eternal.

But, suppose we are not subject to the laws of God; do not comply with the commands of his only begotten Son; disdain to own him as the messenger from the bosom of the Father; and spurn from “our hearts, his glorious truth;” will the “Father of spirits” hold us guiltless? Will peace be round about us? Can we meet the ills incident to life,

with a Christian fortitude ; be kept in wisdom's pleasing path of duty, and when the hour of dying comes, feel resigned to part with all we hold dear on earth ? Most certainly not !

It is a truth which is susceptible of the clearest demonstration, that the violators of the commandments of God, are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. They are in a constant state of agitation ; they flee when no man pursueth, and all is commotion and terror within. " Destruction and misery are in their ways ; and the way of peace have they not known."

In whatever situation a man may be placed, if his heart be not right toward God ; if his soul be not exercised with holy emotions, he must, unavoidably, be unhappy. Sin and misery are inseparably connected. Notice the character and condition of those who have not been subject to the government or the laws of the Creator, and it will be found, that instead of being the recipients of peace and joy, the opposite has been the case, and their dying moments have been embittered with the most unholy reflections. In the first place, if we turn to the volume of inspira-

tion, we find many illustrations of the truth here assumed, that, without giving heed to the mandates of heaven, there is no real enjoyment. Look at the first murderer. Here is a man who has imbrued his hands in the warm blood of his own brother. Without any real cause, Cain deprived Abel of his life. What was the consequence? Did it impart to him that peace that ever flows from the fountain of love? No, no! far from this. The Almighty placed a dark mark upon his brow. And when the voice of his brother's blood, came up from the ground, in thunder tones, and, he was driven as a vagabond from the face of the earth, with deep anguish of soul, he exclaimed: "My punishment is greater than I can bear!"

The children of Israel were destroyed for their heaven-daring crimes; the inhabitants of the old world, went on from one degree of wickedness to another, until they were swept from the earth, by the "besom of destruction," and overwhelmed in a watery grave.

Look, also, to infidel France. When she adopted the principles of infidelity; when she embraced the contaminating and unholy views as propagated by those who disdain to

acknowledge the government of God, as revealed in the scriptures, then she declared death to be an eternal sleep. Public worship was utterly abolished; the churches converted into "temples of reason," in which atheistical and licentious homilies were substituted for the prescribed service: and an absurd and ludicrous imitation of the pagan mythology, was exhibited under the title of the "religion of reason." In the principal church of every town, a tutelary goddess was installed with a ceremony equally pedantic, frivolous, and profane; and the females, selected to personify this new divinity, "were persons of the most licentious conduct, who received the adorations of the municipal officers, and of the multitudes, whom fear or force, or motive of gain, had collected together on the occasion. Contempt for religion or decency, became the test of attachment to the government. All distinctions of right and wrong, were confounded. The grossest debauchery triumphed. The reign of atheism and of reason, was the reign of terror. Almost the whole nation was converted into a horde of assassins. In one part of France, the course of a river (the Loire) was impeded by the drowned bodies of the

ministers of religion, several hundreds of whom were destroyed in its waters ; children were sentenced to death, for the faith and loyalty of their parents ; and those, whose infancy had sheltered them from the fire of the soldiery, were bayoneted as they clung about the knees of their destroyers. The moral and social ties were torn assunder. For a man to accuse his own father, was declared to be an act of civism, worthy of a true republican ; and to neglect it, was pronounced a crime that should be punished with death. Women denounced their husbands, and mothers their sons, as traitors. The kingdom appeared to be changed into one great prison ; and the inhabitants converted into felons. To contemplative men, it seemed for a season, as if the knell of the whole nation was tolled, and the world summoned to its execution and its funeral. Within the short period of ten years, not less than three millions of human beings are supposed to have perished in that single country, by the influence of atheism."*

In consequence of departing from the laws of God, the nation suffered severe judge-

* Horne's Introduction.

ments, and many of the advocates of this gloomy sentiment, lived the most unholy lives, and left the world in wretchedness and despair.

The Almighty will not hold guiltless, nations or individuals, who are not subject to his moral government. But, the great reason given by the apostle, in the context, why mankind should be in subjection “unto the Father of spirits,” is, that he corrects us for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. His chastisements are salutary, designed for the welfare and happiness of all his subjects. Our heavenly Father does not punish the transgressor for the sake of punishing alone; He visits him in judgement, not to gratify a feeling of revenge. He has a high and merciful motive in view; it is for the good of the sinner that the “Holy One” visits him in judgement. This is susceptible of the clearest proof, from the testimony afforded in the volume of divine truth. Hence, it is declared, “As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his evil way, and live.” Ezek. xxxiii. 1. “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always

chide ; neither will he keep his anger forever." Psalms ciii. 8, 9. "The Lord will not cast off forever. For he doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." Lam. iii. 31, 33. "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him ; for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. Furthermore, we have had fathers of our flesh, who corrected us, and we gave them reverence ; shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits and live? For they verily, for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness." Heb. xii: 5, 6, 9, 10. Thus are we assured that the design of punishment is for the reformation, or the good of the punished. Punishment is used, in the hands of the Great Judge, as a *means*, and not an *end*, in his wise and holy government. And consequently, according to the scripture testimony here adduced, and the inference drawn from that testimony, the conclusion is as plain as the sun at noon day, without a single cloud to veil it, that the doctrine which teaches that the sinner shall be tormented "without relief, and without end,"

has no foundation in reason, or in truth. Did not Jehovah chastise mankind for their benefit, he would not be entitled to their reverence and praise. If he has determined to punish the sinner, in the coming world, throughout all ages, merely to gratify a spirit of revenge, or to exhibit his awful power, he is no more worthy of the love of his intelligent creation, than an earthly parent would be, who should torment his offspring merely to gratify a spirit of malignant revenge. Such a God, in the language of the gifted Channing, "*We would not love if we could, and we ought not if we would.*"

Oh! then, let us trust in the goodness of God—let us submit to his authority, and reverence his holy character; and rejoice that he hath determined, instead of punishing the children of men without a view to their welfare, to bring sin and its direful consequences to a final termination, and to bestow upon all the families of the earth, a salvation forever to be enjoyed.

This delightful truth, presents Jehovah to the human mind in the most charming light, and incites it to every good and perfect work. It was spoken by the mouth of all the holy *prophets* since the world began. The Savior

often dwelt upon it, and the divinely inspired Apostle, who spake the words of the text, bore witness to it in the following manner: "The creature (or creation) was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope. Because the CREATION itself shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." Romans viii: 20, 21. Having a full assurance that we shall live beyond "The valley of the shadow of death," may we rejoice in the government of Him who reigns without a rival, and in the blissful triumphs of the faith of the Redeemer, leave all things of a fading nature, and enter upon the lovely scenes of another and a better world. AMEN.

PRAYER.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, we desire to render unto Thee our thanks that we are permitted to come into Thy holy presence, and address Thee by the endearing appella-

tion of Father. Wilt Thou lift upon us the light of Thy divine countenance, and fill our souls with all needed good. May our assembling together this day, improve our minds in the knowledge of those things which make for peace. We thank Thee, O ! Lord, for our existence, and for the varied blessings Thou has conferred upon us. Numerous are the testimonials of Thy goodness. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard." We would devoutly thank Thee, that Thou hast, in thine unbounded love, commissioned thine only and well-beloved Son, and sent Him into the world, for the purpose of teaching us the way, the truth, and the life. Enable us to follow His examples — to comply with His glorious requisitions, and to adorn the beautiful spirit of Christianity. Oh ! that we may be the recipients of that wisdom "which is pure, peaceable, gentle, easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits," that we may "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ." Imbue our minds with those Chris-

tian graces, which shall sustain and comfort us in sorrow's dark hour, that we may feel resigned to the dispensations of Thy Providence; believing that the afflictions of life come from a Father's hand—are directed by a Father's love, and are designed to bring us into subjection to Thee, and live. Forgive us our manifold sins, and blot out our transgressions. Raise up the bowed down—comfort the mourner—impart liberty to the down-trodden and enslaved, and illumine the benighted world with the light of divine truth. "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, be ascriptions of praise, and glory, through Jesus Christ, world without end.

AMEN.

SERMON VII.

THE POWER OF EXAMPLE.

BY REV. G. R. SHAW, DIXFIELD.

MATHEW V: 16.

“LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE BEFORE MEN, THAT THEY
MAY SEE YOUR GOOD WORKS, AND GLORIFY YOUR
FATHER WHO IS IN HEAVEN.”

THIS is the advice of the Savior of the world, the great moral sun that is to illuminate the whole moral universe, giving “the light of the knowledge of God.”

As the sun, when he retires from the horizon, is succeeded by the planets and the stars which irradiate the heavens he has quitted, with a lustre though more feeble, yet such as shows they partake of his brightness

and supply his place; so when He, who is emphatically styled THE SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, was about to leave this earth, he promised that the faithful should arise in his stead, to enlighten the world in the knowledge of his truth, and diffuse its salutary influence through every region and every age.

When, at the first creation, God said, "LET THERE BE LIGHT, AND THERE WAS LIGHT," it was to the end that darkness might be dispersed, and his works become visible, and his perfections manifest; and, when, at the second creation, our Lord Jesus Christ says, "LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE BEFORE MEN," he intends that those whom he had just called "*the light of the world*," should endeavor to dissipate the moral darkness of mankind, by instructing them in the doctrine of his gospel, and by displaying the happy effects of his religion, in the purity of their lives, and the lustre of their virtues.

There is great propriety and beauty in the metaphor which he here used. Nothing is more apt to attract the eyes, and enliven the countenance, than light, especially that which shines in a dark place. So nothing can more excite the observation, engage the attention, or gladden the hearts of beholders, than a

fair, bright and excellent character appearing in the midst of a dissolute and corrupt generation. And, as all luminous bodies, in proportion to the degree of their own brightness, diffuse their light around them, and at a distance enlighten other bodies ; so, in a moral and religious sense, a good example is a light shining in darkness, spreading its influence every way, diffusing instruction and knowledge ; motives to reformation, and encouragements to virtue.*

There is observable in human nature, a peculiar proneness to imitation. Hence, the early formation of our habits. In infancy, we catch the ideas and conform to the manners of our parents and acquaintance. As we progress in life, we learn to follow and copy those whom we respect as superiors, venerate as instructors, or love as friends. We assimilate to our associates, imbibe their opinions, and imitate their conduct ; we even take their mode of speech and tone of voice. Indeed, example has a kind of fascination or

* Cicero observes, that the reason why we are formed, pleased and able to admire the beauty and regularity of the heavenly bodies, was to admonish us to imitate their constancy and order, in the noble beauty of a worthy behavior.

charm which it is almost impossible to resist. It carries with it both instruction and encouragement. How important, then, that our examples should be such as are worthy of imitation! It works, though gradually and imperceptibly, yet more powerfully and successfully than we are aware of; like light, silent in its operations, but wonderful in its effects. It has an eloquence which reaches the heart. No language is more persuasive or instructive. It admonishes without exciting resentment, and corrects without giving offence, and thus possesses all the utility without the formality of reproof.

As a good picture strikes us more forcibly, and gives a more adequate, lively, and impressive idea of the object represented by it, than any description by words could do; so goodness or excellency of any kind represented by precepts, does not so powerfully move the affections as when we see it delineated in the life. Nor is there anything which can so effectually recommend any system, and render it worthy of all acceptation, exclusive of its own intrinsic worth, as its beneficial and happy effects made visible in the character of its advocates. These carry with them undeniable evidence of the value of

those principles from whence they flow, and whose tendency is thus conspicuously good.

In farther discoursing on the passages under consideration, I propose to show, in the first place, to my hearers in general, the importance of a good example, as exhibiting and vindicating the principles of Christianity; and, secondly, apply the subject, by urging a course of conduct that shall promote the best interest of the cause we love, and reflect lustre and honor upon the denomination to which we belong.

I. It is the peculiar honor and glory of Christianity, in its first promulgation, that the behavior of its professors was agreeable to the admirable precepts they inculcated; that the integrity of their morals was answerable to the purity of their faith; and that the goodness of their example, and the holiness of their conversation, the irreproachableness of their conduct, and the amiableness of their manners, adorned the doctrine they taught, and gave it peculiar lustre in the eyes of the world. Prophecies had foretold its intent, and miracles announced its divinity; but the life of its Author, devoted to acts of kindness and benevolence, and the life of its followers exhibited the religion in its genuine influence,

and confirmed its intrinsic excellency. And it seems to have been the design of our Lord, that in every after age, it should extend itself by the internal evidence of its admirable precepts, and the external display of its benign effects. And if its professors did but act up to their principles, an appeal might be made to their lives for the best recommendation of their faith; and less would need be written in defence of the gospel; for every doubt and every objection must yield to the loveliness of example, and the eloquence of practice.

When the graces of Christianity adorn the character, and its virtues dignify the conduct, its beauty must attract every eye, and its worth gain on every heart. Men, from admiring, will insensibly be induced to imitate such illustrious models, which, “bettering all precept, shine before the world, the fairest call to good.” Such bright displays will not only be seen, but felt, and may kindle, even in the coldest and most insensible hearts, a noble emulation, the best of all emulation—the emulation of doing well. For a good example, as has been already intimated, has not only in itself a tendency to form the tempers and morals of others to an assimilation,

but it also places religion in a very engaging light, and naturally begets an esteem, love and choice of it in every observer.

True, the sublime teachings and heavenly doctrines of Jesus Christ, surpassed in glory and excellency, all others ; but the astonishing success that attended his ministry, must be attributed to the power of example. In vain had Jesus taught the sublime truth, that God is a purely spiritual Father ; that his very nature is love, and that all his attributes centre and harmonize in this changeless and immortal principle ; in vain endeavored to prove the divinity of his mission ; in vain besought men, by all the fervor and power of superhuman eloquence, to receive his message, and to acknowledge himself as the Son of God—had he not been good. It was his godlike life, his pure, and high, and heavenly morality, that gave a sanctifying efficacy, and an overwhelming might to his instructions. When he taught that men should be just, merciful, forgiving, and good ; that the poor and distressed, the lost and wandering, should be treated with compassion or sympathy, enemies with love, and all classes with kindness and affection, he most gloriously illustrated these requisites in his personal inter-

course with them, adding to the beauty of his precepts, the power of his example.

Jesus depended, not so much upon the heavenly doctrines which he taught; not upon the simple, and beautiful, and impressive eloquence in which it was communicated; nor yet upon the multitudes "out of every place," that hung upon his steps, and who listened with rapture to his message of love, to give character and success to the gospel ministry, as upon the things which he did. "Go and show John the things that ye do hear and see; the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them." The success of his message was not so much the effect of what the preacher said, as how he lived, and what acts he performed.

With the utmost propriety, then, did the Savior recommend to his disciples an exemplary conduct, but as befitting the high and honorable office he had assigned them, and as eminently conducive to its success in the world.

That the apostles carried out the requirements, doctrines, and examples of their Mas-

ter, may be learned by reference to their history. They were actuated by the same sense of duty, and performed it with similar moral courage. Like him, they lived ; like him, they were kind, frank, self-sacrificing and forgiving. They sought no service, no good, no approbation, but that of truth, of obedience, of conscience, and of God. And here lies the great secret of the power which they exerted over the minds of men, their living in conformity to the principles and doctrines which they taught. Did they require love and reverence toward God, kindness and beneficence toward men, they set the example, and illustrated their meaning, and the influence of their doctrines, by reducing them to practice. This alone could make them successful ; for the truth can win the hearts of men, and become irresistible in its might, glorious in its moral and social influences, only when illustrated by the beauty of holiness.

What was their duty as teachers, is becoming us as disciples. If we would see the great and important principles of the Gospel reign and triumph, and enjoy the glorious results of its manifestation, the great and collective body of its professors must obey its requirements. That the truth may prosper and be

glorified, and men be most readily and effectually drawn into the kingdom of Christ, those who hear must be virtuous, diligent, and persevering, as well as those who preach. And especially should our *faith* be founded upon reason, free from absurdity, giving a consistent and rational exposition of the Scriptures of divine truth, as every inconsistency, as well as every deviation, is considered a reason for skepticism.

It is, therefore, highly expedient that we give our religion all the authority of our acknowledgement, and all the recommendation of our example; that by our conversation and conduct we may "exhibit lucid proof that we are honest in the sacred cause ;" and that it may be apparent in our "good words," that christianity produces the happiest effects, contributes to the improvement and felicity of man, and to the honor and glory of God.

Be ye, therefore, shining professors and bright examples of religion, as were the followers of Christ, who lived in a dark and misguided age! Thus adorn the doctrine of God your Savior, making your lives a faithful commentary upon it, and a high recommendation of it! Thus win it admirers and gain it proselytes that will do honor to its cause.

Let it be remembered, that our good works may be conspicuous without being ostentatious. The appearing with a sad countenance, the making of a great profession, and a devotedness to mere outward forms, without regard to examples is no proof of honesty ; for the genuine and unaffected appearances resulting from righteousness and virtue, may be exhibited without the least appearance of hypocrisy. We need not *speak* great things, but *live* them. We should, however, manfully avow what we sincerely believe ; and by an open and visible attachment to duty, express our regard to the honor of God, and give resplendency to the christian name.

It is true, that many of the good effects of religion are the private excercises and satisfactions of the heart, and known only to the Deity and our own souls. But yet there are many things which are made visible in the life ; *these*, those acquainted with us, will notice, and from them judge of our real character. *These*, therefore, should be such as will exemplify the excellent principles by which we are governed, such as men may behold with the greatest pleasure, and follow with the greatest advantage ; such as may render *us* friendly luminaries, serving at once to en-

lighten the paths and kindle the emulation of all around us. And it may be reasonably expected, that such an experimental representation of goodness as this, will gain a great many adherents to the cause of truth and humanity.

The natural tendency of a good example to induce those who observe it to our imitation ; and the great probability there is, that it will have this effect, upon some at least, if not upon all who see it, is a very powerful inducement to the faithful performance of the duty we are recommending. Because, if it have this effect, we shall do the greatest kindness to our neighbor, and obtain the most ample satisfaction and reward—(for “in keeping the commandments there is great reward”)—and also bring a glory upon the religion we profess in the diffusion of its truth. These considerations alone should be sufficient to stimulate all our endeavors, and to demand our best conduct. Let us not decline then, giving sufficient outward proofs of being ourselves moved and actuated by a pure spirit of Godliness ; and let us strive, by all practicable and prudent methods to propagate the same in others. Let us impart freely our knowledge, and like the glorious luminaries of

heaven, reflect the light we receive, and not be like those opaque substances which absorb or intercept every ray of brightness, and even cast a shade on each surrounding body. Let us "shine as lights in the world," guiding others to virtue by the brilliancy of our example.

These observations and counsels are equally applicable to us all, both as Christians and Universalists, for to be *Universalists practically*, we must be *Christians*. We are alike "built upon the foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone." Indulge me, however, while I apply this subject, as I proposed, in the second place, by recommending such a course of conduct more especially to my brethren in the faith, as shall reflect light and honor upon our denomination, displaying the character of our religion, and illustrating its benevolent desires.

II. As a bad example is as powerful in the encouragement of vice, as is a good one in the promotion of virtue, you will permit me to remark, that there are many things calculated to intercept moral light, causing us to remain in the regions of the shadow of death. We should be careful, then, that we avoid

every thing that will absorb the light of truth, or prevent it from shining out. We should see that we do not blow the poisonous breath of *slander*, on the fair and untarnished reputation of a neighbor; that we avoid *falsehood*, tending to destroy our confidence in one another, and to sever the holy ties of ardent and devoted friendship; that we avoid *fraud* and *extortion*; as the one will prevent us from rendering to every man his due, and the other lead us, like the heartless, soulless, and graceless miser to seek opportunity, to grind the poor, and wrest the last penny from the hand of the cheerless child of penury and want; that we refrain from *profanity*, so exceedingly debasing in its effects, without one redeeming quality, or any thing in itself to commend it to our favor, affording no enjoyment, neither mental nor physical, moral nor religious; and that we abstain from *intemperance*, so destructive to the moral and spiritual light of the intellectual world, or rendering its rays so divergent as to destroy its influence. For it tends to debase, corrupt, and blight the social principles of the heart; to enervate the moral and religious sensibilities of man; to injure his mental and physical constitution, and worst of all, to lead him to

deeds of wickedness, and deprive him of the bright rays of truth, by causing him to sit under the shadows of this cloud of vice. This dark catalogue of faults is well calculated to absorb our moral light, and prevent it from shining before men.

Since many are ignorant of our doctrine, and will not receive the truth, the generality of them will make up their opinion from the deportment of its professors. This ought to serve as a very powerful call to every one of us, uniformly and openly to display those qualities and virtues so strongly inculcated and warmly recommended in our professions of faith. To little purpose shall we commend our doctrine, and extol the excellency of its principles and purposes, if our lives give not corroborative evidence to our assertions, and prove not the propriety of our encomiums. If it does not have a salutary influence upon our lives, making us wiser and better, our opposers will have more reason to suspect the efficacy of our tenets ; and if no good effects are apparent, they will doubt whether any are produced. How necessary is it, therefore, brethren, that ye "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation,

among whom ye shine as lights in the world ! ”*

But let our conduct be a fair elucidation of the principles of our doctrine, and be modeled by its precepts, and we shall not be accountable for every unreasonable prejudice, or for every unfounded suspicion. Then, if people will condemn our principles without examination and decide upon our deeds without candor or justice, we have the inward consciousness of integrity and good intentions, and the outward display of such conduct as shall prove their censures unjust. Then, though we may be unable to convince them of the truth of our doctrine, we may hope, “by well doing, [the power of example,] to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men ; ” to confute all illiberal censurers, by letting our light so shine as to show the good influence of our sentiments upon our tempers and lives ; and, in spite of sneers and invectives, secure the approbation of the wise and good. Thus,

“ We'll dissipate each dark and threatening cloud,
That prejudice and calumny can raise,
By radiant probity of heart and life,
And persevering deeds of love and peace.”

*Philip 2: 15.

As light is not held forth merely to manifest itself, but to show some other useful thing, which, without it, might have remained in obscurity, so we should delight to exhibit the power, wisdom, mercy, goodness, and justice of God; to speak of his infinite love, manifested to us in the gift of our existence, with the assurance that His parental administration embraces all the intelligent creatures he has made, and that the result must be perfect, worthy of such a Being, and consistent with our final good; in the innumerable blessings, which, by his bountiful hand, are made to surround us; in the gift of his only begotten Son, our Savior; and in our prospective redemption from sin and moral defilements, He having made us heirs of immortality. But we can bring men to know and feel this inspiring truth, only as we shadow it forth in our own lives and actions; and thus, by our moral worth, not only show the brightness of our own character, but lend a lustre to our cause, by rendering its sentiments better understood.

And, if we would have others investigate our sentiments, that they may understand them, we should set the example by acquainting ourselves with theirs. To neglect to do

this, shows a want of confidence in our faith, and in our ability to defend it ; for error always seeks darkness, and shuns investigation, while truth approaches light, and seeks investigation, and the man, who has received the light, and does not let it shine out, but hides behind the cloud of popular applause, or selfish motives, is a slave, destitute of moral courage, unworthy of confidence or trust.

That our light may shine before men, let us commence the work of self-examination ; see whether our conduct comports with our profession ; and let the work of reform commence in our own hearts ; for one reason why the world is not reformed, is, because every man would have others make a beginning, and never thinks of himself. Let a new era in the history of our denomination now dawn upon us. We have all received some light, and that we may the more effectually reflect it, let us "*strive together*," and so concentrate the rays of light as to bring them to a focus, and render them more powerful in the diffusion of truth and righteousness. And now, let us ardently desire to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life." "Now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

In conclusion, we should "let our light shine before men," by being kindly affectioned, one towards another, with brotherly love; for members of a religious society, like members of a family circle, should love one another, and imitate the Savior, "the light of the world," by observing his precepts, by "overcoming evil with good." He is to overcome evil with good, darkness with light, error with truth, hatred with love; this he is to do, by the power of the Gospel. Hence, Paul to Titus says, (Titus, 2: 11.) The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men." Literally translated, says Dr. Clark, the passage would read, "For the grace of God, that which saves, *hath shone forth upon all men.*" And, as God's grace signifies God's favor or benefit, in this place, it may be termed THE GOSPEL, which declares God's infinite mercy to the world; and is not only a favor of infinite worth in itself, but announces the greatest gift of God to man, Jesus Christ, the "Sun of righteousness."

"Now," continues our author, "it cannot be said, except in a very refined or spiritual sense, that this Gospel had then appeared to all men, or shone upon them; but it may be said, that it bringeth salvation to all men;

this is its design, and it was to taste death for every man, that its Author came into the world. There is a beauty and energy in the original word, rendered hath appeared, but morning hath shined out, that is rarely noted ; it seems to be a metaphor taken from the sun. As by his rising in the East, and shining out, he enlightens successively, the whole world ; so the Lord Jesus, who is called the Sun of righteousness,* arises on the whole human race, with healing in his wings. And as the light and heat of the sun are denied to no nation nor individual, so the grace of the Lord Jesus ; this also shines out upon all ; and God designs that all mankind shall be equally benefitted by it, in reference to their souls, as they are in respect to their bodies, by the sun that shines in the firmament of heaven. But as all the parts of the earth are not immediately illuminated, but come into the solar light successively, not only in consequence of the earth's diurnal revolution round its own axis, but in consequence of its annual revolution round its whole orbit, so this Sun of Righteousness, who has shined out, is bringing every part of the habitable globe into His divine light, that

*Malachi, 4: 2.

light is shining more and more to the perfect day ; so that gradually and successively, he is enlightening every nation, and every man ; and when his great year is filled up, every nation of the earth shall be brought into the light and heat of this unspotted, uneclipsed, and eternal Sun of righteousness and truth. Wherever the Gospel comes, it brings salvation. * * * It is no objection to this view of the subject, that whole nations have not yet received the Divine light. When the earth and the sun were created, every part of the globe did not come immediately into the light ; to effect this purpose fully, there must be a complete revolution, as has been marked above, and this could not be effected till the earth had not only revolved on its own axis, but passed successively through all the signs of the zodiac. When its *year* was completed, and not till then, every part had its due proportion of light and heat. God may, in his infinite wisdom, have determined the *times* and the *seasons* for the full manifestations of the Gospel to the nations of the world, as he has done in reference to the solar light ; and when the Jews are brought in with the fullness of the Gentiles ; then, and not till then, can we say, the *grand revolution of the important*

YEAR of the Sun of Righteousness is completed. * * * * * The great year, the (Gospel year) is rolling on, and all the parts of the earth are coming successively, and now rapidly into the light. The vast revolution seems to be nearly completed, and the whole world is about to be filled with the light and glory of God."

This is the light of the Son of God, "the true light which enlightens every man coming into the world." This is the light we should reflect, not in word only, but by *example*. Prospectively the light of immortality is beaming upon us, emanating from God, through the Redeemer. To Him, let us sing the warmest praises of our lips, yield the best powers of our minds, and give the purest affections of our hearts, now and forever.

AMEN.

PRAYER.

OUR FATHER who art in heaven, Thou, who art the Fountain of light, and the Giver of every good and perfect gift, we thank Thee for the gift of Thy Son, and the glory of Thy manifestations to the world, that through him

we have the revelations of immortality, and that he suffered and died to redeem us from moral darkness, and make us heirs of light and glory. Most devotedly do we adore Thee for his heavenly teachings, for his holy life, for his unchanging love, for his patience under wrongs, for his willingness to suffer for the cause of truth, and the good of man. May his wise instructions be as a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path ; and his perfect example incite us to be actively and eminently good. That this may be the case, be it our care to amend whatever is amiss among us, and rise to the greatest perfection in virtue. O God, wilt Thou give us the spirit of Thy Son, that we may imitate Thee in Thy forbearance and forgiveness, and like him, whom Thou has sent for our Light and Guide, love those whose hearts are inflamed with hatred. Save us, we beseech Thee, from a revengeful spirit and help us to overcome evil with good. Be it our joy and happiness to support and comfort one another in affliction, with those strong consolations which the gospel affords. May our example and conduct in life prove a high recommendation, and a fair illustration of our principles, and reflect the brightest honor upon our profession and char-

ter. And, that we may be happily instrumental in turning many to righteousness, may we have wisdom from above, and "shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever!"

AMEN.

SERMON IX.

A REASON FOR MY HOPE.

BY REV. S. STETSON, BRUNSWICK.

I PETER 3: 15.

**"BE READY ALWAYS TO GIVE AN ANSWER TO EVERY
MAN THAT ASKETH YOU A REASON OF THE HOPE
THAT IS IN YOU, WITH MEEKNESS AND FEAR."**

CHRISTIANS in the Apostle's day had to pass through many trying scenes. They were persecuted by unbelievers on account of their faith in Christ. But Peter encourages them to follow that which is good. Then if they suffered for righteousness sake, they would be happy in their minds, and would have no need to be afraid of the terror, nor troubled *at the opposition of their persecutors.*

After giving his brethren instructions relating to their duty to their fellow men and their relatives, he addresses them with respect to one another, as professed Christians.

“ Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another ; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous : not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing ; but contrariwise, blessing : knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile : Let him eschew (or avoid) evil, and do good ; let him seek peace and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers : but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil. And who is he that will harm you, if ye be the followers of that which is good ? ”

Peter then exhorts them to sanctify or glorify the Lord God in their hearts ; and, said he, “ *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.* ”

In giving reasons for our hope, it is proper that we first give the reason of our hope in the peculiar doctrine which distinguishes us

from all other Christian sects: namely, the reason why we do not believe in endless sin and misery; but in the final holiness and happiness of all mankind. And

1. We do not believe in endless sin and misery, because it is contrary to the *goodness* and *kindness* of God.

The goodness of God must necessarily, aim at the happiness of the universe. The greatest good, or happiness of the intelligent system is the only object worthy an infinite God. The most orthodox support the sentiment, that the glory of God is the highest object in creating the universe; and to display all his perfections, in securing the greatest sum of happiness among his creatures, is the glory of God. But if a part of God's creatures are endlessly wicked and miserable, God cannot be good and kind in creating them. Their existence is a curse, and not a blessing. To suppose that heaven is happier on account of an endless hell, is the same absurd supposition, as to suppose that any human body is happier on account of the sufferings of one of its members. We read and know by experience, concerning the human body, that if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it. So in the family

of man. No one can be always happier, because others are miserable. It is not inconsistent with the divine goodness, to cause a partial evil to exist for a time, to secure the universal good. The most savage spirit grows sick at never ending wretchedness. The savage may torment for a time, to gratify some revengeful disposition; but even revenge itself, would not torment always. Allowing wicked men to be destitute of every thing that is lovely, and altogether hateful; this very circumstance proves that divine goodness and kindness must oppose their endless existence. God has cut off hundreds of generations of wicked men from the earth; and in most, if not in every instance, it was because they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, by their great abominations. And was God so opposed to their sins that he would take them away from the earth, and will he uphold them in existence, to sin eternally against him?

Those divines who believe in the divine purposes, admit that God will overrule all evil for good. This supposes that God's people, the saints, will be happier on account of the misery of the wicked; for no one can suppose that the wicked will them-

selves be happier for endless misery. Hence, if God is good and kind, he can no more make a part of his creatures miserable, to promote the happiness of others, than he can make all his creatures endlessly miserable, and still be infinitely good and kind.

2. We do not believe in endless sin and misery, because it is contrary to the *desires* of all benevolent beings. Sin and misery are painful subjects for the benevolent mind to contemplate. All good men in every age of the world have deplored their existence in the earth. Their humanity and piety have been wounded and grieved by the wickedness and wretchedness, which they have witnessed among their fellow men. It has been the desire and prayer of all good men, to be delivered themselves and to have others delivered from the power and dominion of sin. And will good men be so changed in another world, that they shall be happier for the existence of sin and misery among God's creatures to all eternity? No! the goodness and kindness of men, are like the goodness and kindness of God. Had men the wisdom and power of God, their benevolent hearts would lead them to find out a way to subdue the wicked, and make them obedient and

happy. Who can doubt the wisdom and power of God? The goodness of God, and the benevolence of man lead them to desire the holiness and happiness of mankind. If God's wisdom and power are equal to his goodness, what can hinder the salvation of the whole human family? Why do Christians pray God to convert sinners, if they believe he is not able to convert them? It therefore is denying the perfections of God, and the benevolence of man to admit that any of God's creatures will be always wicked and miserable.

3. We hope that all men will be made finally, holy and happy, because God says, in his word, that he *desires it*.

We read that God loved mankind when they were ungodly, sinners, and enemies. Now if God is unchangeable, will he not always love them? Will not love always seek the welfare of the object loved. "Love worketh no ill to its neighbor." Nor to an enemy. We are required by Christ, to love our enemies as he loved his enemies, and as God our Heavenly Father loved the world. Hence we read, "As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that he turn and live"

He is not willing that any should perish, "but will have all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth." Are we not taught in these passages, and many others like them, that God desires, that it is his will and pleasure, that all men shall ultimately, repent and become holy and happy? And can we suppose that God desires an event, which he is unable to accomplish? Certainly not.

Paul says, "God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. And God says by his prophet, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure."

4. We hope that all men will finally be made holy and happy, because *Christ died for all men*. We read that he is the propitiation for *the sins of the whole world*." That "*he tasted death for every man*." That "*he gave his life a ransom for all*, to be testified in due time. Now can we suppose that Christ Jesus would undertake to save lost men, and lay down his life for them, and have power given him to subdue them, and yet fail of accomplishing the work? Jesus is called the *resurrection and the life*. He had power on earth given him to forgive sins, cast out evil spirits, heal the sick, and to raise the dead:

We read that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin ; that "he shall be for salvation to the ends of the earth ;" that "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied, for the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand."

5. We hope that no one of mankind will be endlessly wicked and miserable ; but that all will be made happy, because the gospel was designed for *all*, and *all* are called upon to repent and believe. Christ said to his disciples, after he rose from the dead, " go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to *every creature*. God commandeth *all men every where* to repent. God speaks through his prophet, " Ho *every one* that thirsteth, come ye to the waters. Thus it appears that the gospel was designed for all. Why should all be invited to the gospel feast, if God determined that a large part of mankind should be left to perish, without partaking it ?

Some were invited in Christ's day, who would not come. And he said, that none of those men, that were bidden should taste of his supper. But though they would not come at that time, because their eyes were blinded, and have as a nation been cut off from their olive tree, the external privileges of the gos-

pel, and been made to suffer the condemnation connected with unbelief, yet we are assured that "*all Israel shall be saved.*"

We are commanded to receive the record of the gospel; and this is the record, that God hath given us eternal life and this life is in his Son. Hence Jesus is called the Savior of the world. How can ALL ISRAEL be saved, and Christ be the Savior of THE WORLD if millions of the human family are eternally lost?

6. We hope that all men will be saved from their sins and made happy, because *Christ prayed for all*; and we are commanded to follow his example. And we should pray in faith, for whatsoever is not of faith is sin; and he that doubteth is condemned, already.

In the 17th chap. of John, Jesus intercedes for the whole world of mankind. He always prays first for himself, secondly for his disciples, thirdly for believers, and lastly for the world. He prays that the world may believe, and he that believeth shall be saved.

Again: he prays that the world may know that the Father sent him.

In the third verse of this chapter he says, "this is life eternal, that they may know thee,

the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." Thus our Lord prays for the salvation of the world.

Christ prays for his murderers on the cross ; "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Will not Christ's prayers be answered in due time ? He asked for things agreeable to the will of God. He said to his disciples, ask and it shall be given you. He commands them to pray for all men. Can we suppose that God would require us to pray in faith for those things, which he would not give ?

7. We hope all men will be saved because Christ commands us to forgive our brethren seventy times seven ; to do good to those that hate us ; to overcome evil with good, &c. Now who can believe that God requires us to forgive those whom he will not forgive, to pardon those whom he will not pardon ; to do good to those whom he has designed for endless anguish. Does God command us to be better than himself ?

8. We do not believe in endless sin and misery, because sin is not infinite. Finite beings can only perform finite acts. If there be different degrees of offence, no one can be infinite. Under the law, different offences received

different degrees of punishment. And our Savior says, that some should be beaten with few stripes, some with many. How can endless punishment be considered just and equal to finite crimes ? The degree of punishment, in order to be just and equal, must not exceed the degree of guilt. But how can *all* the sins of *all* mankind, in *all* ages of the world, merit *endless pain*, and yet it is said a *single sinner* will receive this punishment.

The degree of criminality is in proportion to one's knowledge. But as the knowledge of the most exalted creatures is limited, so must be their actions. Hence there appears to be no equality between never ending misery and the most heinous offences of mankind. If it be said that wicked men will keep on sinning in eternity, therefore they must continue in torment ; I ask, where is the justice of casting, them into or leaving them in this state, where they shall sin and suffer endlessly ? It may be objected, that God, against whom sin is committed, is an infinite Being, therefore every sin is an infinite evil, and deserves endless misery. In reply, I would observe that on this principle, every right desire, or good action is an infinite good, and justly merits endless happiness. But who will make such a plea ?

Admitting this argument conclusive, it will prove that all must have eternal life, for their good works. For where on the face of the earth is there a child that never had so much as one weak desire that was right? To suppose one such child in existence, would prove total depravity from one's birth. But such an idea, involves the horrible sentiment of God's making creatures wicked that he may have occasion to damn them eternally.

We cannot admit that endless misery is true, because the justice of God forbids it. Justice is righteousness. The law of God shows us what is just and right. The law requires love to God. Hence justice requires the same. Justice requires that all creatures be made to do right, not to do wrong.

The common notion is, that justice only inflicts pain. That mercy only gives pleasure. But more correct views of this subject, will lead us to consider both justice and mercy engaged in the same work of reconciling the world unto God.

Justice, it is true, inflicts pain, not to make the creature worse, but to make him better. Hence that justice which has no mercy in it, or connected with it, must be cruelty. And that mercy which has no justice connected

with it, must be weakness, or mere partial fondness. Justice cannot be satisfied in keeping creatures in a course of injustice ; nor in endless misery. For on the supposition that justice requires endless misery, it shows that it can never be satisfied to all eternity. Or in other words, the law which requires creatures to do right, will never be satisfied in the endless sin and misery of mankind.

Were there a law given condemning the transgressor to eternal torment, God could not be just and save the sinner from the curse of the law. All sinners must be cast off forever.

10. We hope that all mankind will finally be saved from sin and misery, because punishment is designed for good. Paul says, that God chastens us for our *profit*, that we may be partakers of his holiness. Now, no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous ; nevertheless afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. We read that "Zion shall be purged and redeemed with judgment." Again, "the Lord will not cast off forever, but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict

willingly, nor grieve the children of men.

What should we call that parent, who should punish his children for any other purpose than to reform them? It is true, the civil laws, or despotic laws of men, condemn criminals to torture and death, without any design of reforming them; but only to prevent their doing more mischief, and to deter others from crime. But must not the divine Being act from as benevolent a principle? especially when we read that "whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."

Cruel despots put their fellow men to tormenting death, and are satisfied, but the common doctrine teaches that God will not be satisfied in this, but will hold up his helpless creatures to hate and blaspheme his name forever. What should we think of a law which requires the murderer to continue to murder? and the thief to continue to steal? and the blasphemer to continue blaspheming? and the hater of God, to continue hating forever?

We hope that all mankind will be ultimately subdued and reconciled to God, because there appears to be expressions in the scriptures, which more strongly express the hap-

piness, than the destruction of men. It is said of the righteous, that "they shall not be ashamed, nor confounded, world without end." Our Savior says of the righteous, that they shall never die; "that they shall never perish, neither can they die any more." The apostle assures us that the saints shall inherit an enduring substance, and a kingdom which cannot be moved; that they shall receive an inheritance and crown which are incorruptible, undefiled, and will not fade away; that they shall be made "incorruptible," "immortal," "glorious" and "spiritual."* There are many other expressions which are applied to the righteous, are much stronger, much more expressive of duration without end, than any term applied to the misery of the wicked. If the sacred writers meant to represent the misery of the wicked to be as long as the happiness of the righteous, why have they not used as strong language to describe it?

12. We hope God will save all his rational offspring, because he has saved some of the chief of sinners in this world. The Scriptures give us account of many great sinners being

* 1st Cor. 15: 42, 43, 44.

fongiven. If God has given repentance and remission of sins to some, why will he not to all, since "he is no respecter of persons." God respects those that fear him and work righteousness, while people of an opposite character, cannot be accepted so as to be happy, till they are made humble and penitent.

Having briefly stated these twelve reasons of our hope, respecting the final destination of all mankind, it may be proper to state the reason true christians have to hope, that they are now in a justified, pardoned and saved state; though they do not believe that all sinners will become reconciled to God, and saved by grace. A true christian believes in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, the promised Messiah, and humbly and penitently trusts in him for salvation from sin; having an habitual desire to obey his commands, and to walk as Christ walked. He has a measure of the spirit of Christ, working in his heart as a ruling, governing principle; and aims at doing the will of God in all things. Such is the Scripture account of a true christian. No doubt there are many sincere christians, who have been educated among those whose doctrines in all particulars are not correct, but who embrace the Savior of sinners, by faith,

which works by love, and overcomes the world ; and whose conduct in general is according to the temper and conduct of Christ. Charity requires that we hope all things concerning those who appear to manifest something of the spirit of Christ, though we may think them in error on some points of christian doctrine.

Some of the following reasons induce many to believe that only a part of mankind will be made holy and happy.

They plead that the words everlasting, forever and eternal, are applied to the punishment of the wicked, as well as to the reward of the righteous. To this, I reply, that these words are ambiguous in their signification. They were applied to the priesthood of Aaron, to the covenant of circumcision ; and to the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish church. But the way we are to determine the extent of these words, is by the subject to which they are applied. Let it first be proved that the misery of the wicked is endless, then we may apply the words to that state. If there were no stronger words and arguments than these to prove that salvation would be endless, our “hope” would not be “sure and *steadfast.*”

2. It is objected to universal salvation, that "he that believeth not shall be damned." And many texts similar are produced to the same purpose. But in reply it may be said, that such texts prove nothing respecting the *duration* of damnation. While men continue in unbelief, they are condemned or damned. But multitudes in this state, have afterwards believed and been saved.

3. It is objected to our sentiments, that the Scriptures say, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell and all the nations that forget God." In reply, it may be observed, that hell, when it does not mean grave or place of the dead, means punishment or misery, without regard to place or duration. Jonah and David and Jesus were cast into hell, when the two first did wickedly; and the last was made a sin offering for us: but they all were delivered. And we have the promise that all the nations which God hath made shall worship before him and serve him: and that death, and hell, and the devil shall be destroyed.

4 To close this subject, I would just observe, that the promises of God appear to lay as the foundation of our hope of the salvation of all men. We might infer from the

nature and the providence of God, where we see his perfections displayed, that endless misery could not be true, any more for mankind, than for the ravenous beasts, and poisonous reptiles, which destroy mankind and one another. But we could not learn certainly that mankind would ever live again, after death, if we had not divine revelation. Hence life and immortality are truly brought to light in the Gospel: which God preached to Abraham: but especially by Jesus Christ, who was the promised seed of Abraham in whom all the nations, families, and kindreds of the earth, should be blest. Jesus was the resurrection and the life. "As in Adam all die, even so, in Christ shall all be made alive."* "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. As sin has reigned unto death, even so shall grace reign through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." Hence all are called upon to look unto God and be saved; even "all the ends of the earth."

God is "the Father of the spirits of all flesh." All souls are his. God is the lover of all souls. He made all for his pleasure

and praise. He has made a feast for all. And he has declared, that all shall be taught of him. That all shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. That he will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sin and iniquity he will remember no more." Then "GOD WILL BE ALL IN ALL."

Amen. Hallelujah! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Amen and Amen!!

PRAYER.

OUR FATHER who art in heaven. As heaven is Thy throne, so is the earth Thy footstool. As Thou, O God, art love, Thou hast so loved the world as to give Thy Son, Jesus Christ, to save the world from sin and death, and give them holiness and eternal life. On account of sin, mankind are prisoners; but on account of Thy mercy they are prisoners of hope. Thou art the God of hope; Thou hast said, blessed are they that hope in Thy mercy.

Thou hast opened a door of hope for lost men, in the gospel of Thy Son, therefore, they are encouraged to lay hold of the hope that is set before them in the gospel; which

shall be as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, and entereth within the veil, where Jesus has for us entered, as our advocate with Thee, the Father, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. We praise Thy name for these great and precious promises, so that we may have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the blessed hope, by which we are saved from sin and despair. For we are assured, by thy servant of old, that he that hath this hope, purifieth himself, as God is pure. Such hoping christians desire to be holy, as Thou art holy. A good hope through grace, encourages christians to run with patience the race set before them, looking unto Jesus, and learning of him to be meek and lowly in heart, and so find rest to their souls. We pray Thee, most merciful God, to help us all to hope in Thee, then our souls will not be cast down within us. Thou Lord canst shine into our hearts, and give us the light of the knowledge of Thy glory. Give us rightly to understand Thy word, then we shall behold as in a glass Thy glory, and be transformed into Thy likeness. Pity the ignorant and unbelieving, who are without hope, and without God in the world, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of sin and satan unto God,

that they may have the forgiveness of sins, and life everlasting. Pour out of Thy spirit of grace and supplication upon all people, especially upon those who have professed to have tasted the good word of God, that theirs may not be the hope of the hypocrite, which perisheth when Thou dost take away his soul. May all christians so walk in Thy light, that they may go on their way, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, rejoicing with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. And may all so draw near to Thee, O God, that Thou wilt draw near unto them, and manifest Thyself unto them, as Thou didst to Thy beloved Son Jesus Christ; and show them that Thou lovest them as thoulovest him; and may they thus be induced, to continue in Thy love. Then they will be ready always, to give answers to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them, with meekness and fear. Now, O most merciful Father, do Thou forgive us all our sins, as we forgive those who have offended us. Help us to deny self and to follow the example and commands of Jesus, Thy holy child. Help us to watch and pray that we enter not into temptation. Deliver us from all evil that will be injurious to us. Feed us with the bread of life, give us godli-

210 PRAYER BY REV. S. STETSON.

ness with contentment; for Thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever and ever.

AMEN.

SERMON X.

PROGRESSIVE GLORY AND HAPPINESS.

BY REV. T. J. TENNEY, NORWAY.

2 COR., 3: 18.

'BUT WE ALL, WITH OPEN FACE, BEHOLDING AS IN A GLASS, THE GLORY OF THE LORD, ARE CHANGED INTO THE SAME IMAGE, FROM GLORY TO GLORY, EVEN AS BY THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD."

FOR many reasons, I consider the subject of this discourse an important one. But particularly so, when we consider that man is accumulating in his allotted years of life, virtues for eternity. We may reasonably come to the conclusion, that whatever makes us better, more like the Pattern Man of the universe, more like man in his most perfect state, is most profitable in inducing us to

come out from our sins, to efforts to attain higher perfection and happiness in the nearer presence of God. While a good of this kind is essentially that of the Bible, every thing that degrades what ought to be rising, is the positive evil of the sensual and devilish. Our subject, we believe, is one of the goods of the Almighty's revelation to human creatures, to lead them to embrace Christianity more fully, and to live more wholly in the service of Heaven. To drop this brief introduction, however, I will notice

- I. Man's present ;
- II. Man's mediate ;
- III. Man's future.

. Then, though it is written that in the eye of God, all have gone out of the way, "deep hidden under wretchedest God-forgetting Cants, *Epicurisms*: * * * forgotten as under foulest fat Lethe mud and weeds, there is yet in all hearts born into this God's world, a spark of the God-like slumbering." Basest, fatherest-gone sinners are every where called upon to repent, thus implying the existence of a nucleus, around which may gather and ripen the religious affections. Total baseness could no more repent, than make and unmake at pleasure the things of life.—

There must be something which can receive and give the loves and affections of the scriptures, which, though apparently lost in iniquity, needs but the hand of a skillful workman to bring it out. However man may seem to have violated the requirements of his Father in heaven, he cannot be an absolute eternal loser by his existence. Never was the day so dark, but the Christian could say with him "who bore record of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honor, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created." The great object of living should not be to teach man that his brother is from the crown of the head to the sole of the foot, inner and outer, matter and spirit, worthless and without a spark of goodness. There is a measure for happiness in every intelligent creature, and he who labors to enlarge this, labors nobly in accordance with the will of the Highest. "But dost thou know, O hearer! yes, certainly thou dost: the zephyrs which call forth Spring in the land of the soul—which call forth flowers and make the air pure and delicious? Certainly thou knowest them, the

little, easy, quiet, unpretending, almost invisible, and yet powerful ; in one word, human kindnesses.” Led by these, there is nothing but may be expected of man. Bad, cold, apparently dead, kindness will respond to kindness, love will answer to its kindred love. Show him that God loves more than man, and he will love God ; lead him to think of heaven as a place where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest, and he will endeavor to prepare himself for it.

I look upon the present as a time in which we ought to prepare ourselves for the society of heaven. Paul teaches us that the Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.” “But,” he continues, “before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith that should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our school-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But that faith is come, we are no longer under a school-master.” Or, in other words, we are no longer under the law, but under faith, finishing our works, and enriching our minds for the spirit land. It is therefore said, “But we all with open face beholding as in a glass

the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory, to glory even as by the spirit of the Lord." While there is a predicted end of sin and suffering, and an assurance that, "Forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same ; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil," spirit, with its acquisitions, must live forever. "Can it be supposed, that a soul furnished with such powers and capacities, capable of traversing the realm of creation, of opening new prospects into the unbounded regions of truth that lie before it, and of appreciating the perfections of the Sovereign of the universe, a soul fired with ardent desires after knowledge, panting after new discoveries of truth and of the grandeur of the Divinity, unsatisfied with all its past attainments, and contemplating a boundless, unexplored prospect before it, should be cast off from existence, and sink into eternal annihilation; at the moment when its capacities were just beginning to expand, when its desires were most ardent, and when the scenes of immensity and eternity were just opening to its view ? If such a supposition could be admitted, man would be the

most inexplicable phenomenon in the universe ; his existence an unfathomable mystery ; and there could be no conceivable mode of reconciling his condition and destination with the wisdom, the rectitude, and the benevolence of his Creator.”* O precious, precious is the hour devoted to the service of God. The enjoyment of such an hour is not only present, but it enlarges the mind for the future. And the soul that is thus engaged from year to year, that is not dilatory in spiritual affairs, that finds something to live for besides self, is making itself ripe for a journey among the stars and suns of glory.

II. I mean by man’s mediate, the state between death and the resurrection. After the sunshine and shade of man’s life, he lies down in the grave. As it is beautifully said, “In the day when the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out of the window shall be darkened, and the doors shall be shut in the streets, when the sound of the grinding is low, and he shall rise up at the voice of the bird, and all the daughters of music shall be brought low ;

* Dick’s Future state.

also when they shall be afraid of that which is high, and fears shall be in the way, and the almond tree shall flourish, and the grasshopper shall be a burden, and desire shall fail, because man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets; or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern. Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." He dies with the acquisitions of the present. I know not how long he is in his coil of flesh after death. It may be a moment, it may be three days, as in the case of Jesus. I am equally ignorant of the duration of the impure passions. Two things, however, should not be overlooked in this place. 1. This is the last death. 2. He that is dead is freed from sin. Beyond this there is no more death, and sin hath no longer its accustomed dominion over us. But, as Paul was particular in answering the question, "How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come?" I will proceed to notice in the third place, man's future.

With the exception of the change freeing

us from tempters and passions, and from attending sufferings of every description, or, in different words, without the encumbrances of the present, its sins, its deaths, its sorrows, its pains and afflictions, we commence the future life. Or to answer as Paul answered, "That which thou sowest is not quickened except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain; it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain; but God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh; but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual

body."* While there is nothing here defining any degree of suffering, I rely upon it as teaching the doctrine that the glories of the resurrection are as different as the glories of the sun, moon and stars. As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead. Individuals differ from each other in having different degrees of light. Not that any are lacking a full measure of peace, but all measures are not the same. Not that any are lacking of the light of heaven, for there is no night there, God is the sun of immortality, but all have not alike capacities for taking it in. Each ransomed soul has its own glory, unaccompanied with corruption, dishonor, weakness, and the natural imperfections of the body, and thus the perfections of the present run into the future, the future beginning with the present's ending. Beyond this, O what fields of glory! Having no knowledge of any real difference in the amount of happiness, all having full measures, measures and capacities will continue to enlarge themselves, and be filled with additional glories, on, on, forever on forever and everlasting on everlasting. And still infinite ages beyond this, O what fields of glory! what

* See Barnes on this passage.

new acquisitions remain to be made! how much the far-reaching eye of faith rejoices the soul in the contemplation of the riches of immortality!

Such views as I have advocated, seem to have been those of the learned Addison. Speaking on this subject in one of his essays, he says, "But a man can never have taken in his full measure of knowledge, has not time to subdue his passions, establish his soul in virtue, and come up to the perfections of his nature, before he is hurried off the stage. Would an infinitely wise Being make such glorious creatures for so mean a purpose? Can he delight in the production of such abortive intelligences, such short-lived reasonable beings? Would he give us talents that are not to be exerted? Capacities that are never to be gratified? How can we find that wisdom which shines through all his works, in the formation of man, without looking on this world as only a nursery for the next; and believing that the several generations of rational creatures which rise up and disappear in such quick succession, are only to receive their first rudiments of existence here, and afterwards to be transplanted into a more friendly climate, where they may spread and flourish to all eternity.

“There is not, in my opinion, a more pleasing and triumphant consideration in religion, than this of the perpetual progress which the soul makes towards perfection without ever arriving at a period in it. To look upon the soul as going on from strength to strength, to consider that she is to shine forever with new accessions of glory, and brighter to all eternity ; that she will be still adding virtue to virtue, and knowledge to knowledge, carries in it something wonderfully agreeable to that ambition which is natural to the mind of man. Nay, it must be a prospect pleasing to God himself, to see his creation forever beautifying in his eyes, and drawing nearer to him, by greater degrees of resemblance.”

Dr. Channing, than whom a greater or better exists not in the denomination to which he belonged, says, in his discourse on spiritual freedom, “A man is not created for political relations as his highest end, but for indefinite spiritual progress, and is placed in political relations as the means of his progress. The human soul is greater, more sacred than the state, and must never be sacrificed to it. The human soul is to outlive all earthly institutions. The distinction of nations is to pass away. Thrones, which have stood

for ages, are to meet the doom pronounced upon all man's works. But the individual mind survives, and the most obscure subject, if true to God, will rise to a power never wielded by earthly potentates." In another place, he says, "It is the duty of the christian teacher to call forth in the soul, a conviction of its immortality, a thirst for a higher existence, and a grandeur and elevation of sentiment, becoming a being who is to live, enjoy, and advance forever."

We verily believe that this good man, this man of peace, this man of freedom, this man of God, is now on his way with his great acquisitions of the past to the greater ones which are forever being presented to the inhabitants of heaven. May we all imitate his examples of love. May we fight the good fight, finish our course, and await, with patience, the crown of life.

I have now laid before you my ideas of the doctrine of man's progress in glory and happiness. While I know of no arguments that can be urged against them, I feel they are such as overcome many of the most important objections alleged against Universalism, and tend to make us better in all the relations of life.

I. Man's interest is in doing well, and admitting the truth of what I have said, he will not only find this interest here, but hereafter. He cannot say, I will spend my time in buying and selling, and getting gain at the expense of religion and present ease, and then die and be blessed with the same amount of happiness of a Howard who spent his life in doing good ; or even of a Black Dahomy, who boiled the rice for the resourceless Mungo Park, and sang all night to him, as he lay to sleep, "Let us pity the poor white man ; no mother has he to fetch him milk, no sister to grind him corn."

2. When it is objected to our doctrine that it makes the condition of such as Miss Bremer mentions in the following manner :

"But the sinful, those degraded to a brutal condition, the villians, who live and die in darkness, in the night of misery and ignorance. Friendly stars which shine so brightly, mysterious lamps of heaven, I look up to you full of hope ! you are worlds for hope, higher places of education for the unfortunate children of earth ! I imagine myself in ye ! O ! yes, I can surely hope ! God is indeed too good,"—I say, when it is objected, that the condition of such as these

will be equal to such as have ever done as they would be done by, I answer, ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God. Though all will be happy, the man of crime will not have a measure for happiness like those who have entered God's courts with the clean hands of such as walk humbly, love mercy, and do justly. Though there be no positive misery where there is no sin, though every man has a full measure, it is not the case that all measures are alike large. These remarks will apply to him, who, after murdering his neighbor, plunges the warm blade into his own bosom. Murderer, though he is, there is yet enough of the good to be separated from the dross in that mysterious manner in which we shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, to give even him a beginning in the religious progression of a future state. Though he may be an humble scholar, far beneath a Paul, with nothing to oppose his progress, he will rise from glory to glory, and ally himself to the higher intelligences of eternity.

3. It appears to me, also, that no doctrine can have so powerful an influence in directing the steps of men in the path of duty. For while it frees God from the alleged injustice

of punishing with no other object than to make the sinner feel his displeasure, it places him before us as one just in marking our offences. Not from fear of utopian evil do I urge the sinner to repent, nor from a fear of endless sufferings. He that spends time to reason, knows that finite sinning cannot merit such punishment. But sinning can and does merit the just, though limited rewards of the Bible. And what these rewards are, may be found in consulting its pages. Or, bringing the subject nearer still, we have probably known a little of them in the way of personal experience. O teach us to shun these by such a course of conduct as shall be at the same time enlarging the soul for the glory that eye hath not seen. While we may not boast of any present piety and goodness, cause us to bless thee, O God of our salvation, that we have that within that is to live where we "all with open face beholding the glory of the Lord, shall be changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the spirit of the Lord." In the flesh, we know our weakness, our disposition to wander from the straight and narrow way; but we feel that the day is not far off when we shall have the voice of angels and the strength of God to sustain us, and no adversary to oppose.

“Therefore my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.”

PRAYER.

GREAT and all-merciful Father, Thou who rulest in the armies of heaven, and among the children of men, we desire to approach Thee with a proper knowledge of our dependence on Thy goodness for all the blessings of life. Good in teaching us how to live; good in teaching the rewards of virtue and the punishments of vice; good in thy promises and threatenings; good in revealing a day of progression in holiness, where no obstacle shall oppose us, and where all shall know Thee from the least to the greatest. We pray that we may imbibe thy perfections, and live in the enjoyment of that peace which is unspeakable and full of glory. Acknowledging our want of divine wisdom, we ask Thee to teach us; acknowledging our weak-

ness, we ask Thee to give us strength; acknowledging our disposition to wander, we ask Thee to make us firm and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord. Through all the changes of Divine Providence, do Thou govern and guide us by that wisdom which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. And at last, when we come to the close of life, suffer us to say with the Psalmist, Though we walk through the valley of the shadow of death, we will fear no evil, for Thou art with us.

AMEN.

SERMON XI.

THE SUBJECTION OF ALL THINGS TO CHRIST AND GOD.

BY REV. G. BAILEY, BRUNSWICK.

1 COR., 15: 28.

“AND WHEN ALL THINGS SHALL BE SUBDUED UNTO
HIM, THEN SHALL THE SON ALSO, HIMSELF, BE SUB-
JECT UNTO HIM THAT PUT ALL THINGS UNDER HIM,
THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL.”

IF there is one thing for which, more than all things else, the true Christian in his prayers to God, most fervently asks, it is that the prediction here uttered by the apostle may be fulfilled. Whatever may be his opinions as to matters of speculation and doctrine on this point, they are all laid aside on his approach to the throne of grace. The fetters

of creed, the shackles of superstition and the chains of prejudice, there become as gossamer, insufficient to restrain the desires of his soul as he pours them forth in the presence of his God. The destruction of sin, the emancipation of universal man from its dominion, and the final and unlimited triumph of holiness, are objects too good not to find place in the desires of the pure in heart. He has cords that vibrate in unison with those of his fellow man wherever found, and as bad as that brother may be in this life, he cannot but wish for his ultimate holiness and peace. It is, then, a matter of the highest interest, to know, that these desires are not to be disappointed and crushed, but that, on the contrary, they are to be gratified to the fullest extent. God "will satisfy the longing soul, and fill the hungry soul with goodness." He has not given in vain to man this inward sighing for universal good — this ardent longing for perfection in all things. These aspirations are all destined to meet with entire gratification; and in connection with the testimony of nature and providence, and the promises of God in his Word, they become an evidence in favor of the truth of the reconciliation of a world. In the language of Inspiration, they

are the “ substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen,” — and as philosophers of old have been almost persuaded of the immortality of the soul without a revelation, because of the strong desire men have for another life, so may we regard the strong desire which all the truly good have for the salvation of universal humanity, as a clear indication that such an event is yet to be accomplished. And when we find these inferences to be supported by the testimony of the inspired writers, we have abundant cause for gratitude to God, that he has thus made us acquainted with truths so intimately concerning our highest interests.

We are here assured of what shall be the end, the result of the dispensation under which we live. Unlike that which preceded it, its object is not confined to a single nation, or to the accomplishment of limited ends. The religion of Moses was instituted, as we may say, for a temporary purpose. Its sole object seems to have been, to cure one nation of idolatry and make it acquainted with the One Only Living and True God; and thus, by establishing effectually the doctrine of the Divine Unity, to prepare the way for the reception of the Gospel. And it is peculiarly

worthy of remark, how effectually that purpose was accomplished. A nation given to idolatry was the one selected. In its infancy, it was enslaved in a heathen land, and in many instances was subjected to the influences of an idolatrous religion. For the space of forty years this singular people journeyed through lands in which they were continually in contact with the foulest of idolators ; and the facility with which they adopted heathen abominations, shows how strongly they were inclined to pagan rites. They were finally settled in a land occupied by image-worshippers, and surrounded by nations sunk in the grossest vices of heathenism ; and by them were in continual danger of being seduced from the worship of the One God. Idolatry with its licentious and beastly rites, was more acceptable than the worship of a Spiritual Being, with its pure and rigid requirements of virtue. Idols multiplied in Israel. Every mountain had its image — every shade and grove its disgusting rites. To cure them of these departures from their national religion, they were subjected to the severest judgments. Tried at different times by every species of calamity, by which we can conceive a nation to be overtaken, visited with “famine, pest-

silence and sword," and overwhelmed with destruction and misery, yet they repented not. The last great judgment was yet to come. That ungodly people were to be carried captive to Babylon, and there to endure a bondage of seventy years. It was there, on the banks of the Euphrates, that they "sat down," "hung their harps upon the willows" and "wept when they remembered Zion." This punishment seems to have been effectual. So complete was the change wrought out thereby, that after their return, even down to this day, it is doubtful whether a recorded instance can be found of the falling away of a Jew to the worship of idols. They steadfastly hold to their faith in One Supreme and Eternal God, and obstinately refuse to adopt Christianity, because of its supposed recognition of a second and third person in the Godhead. Now my hearers will bear in mind, that the object of the Jewish economy was to prepare the way for Christianity, by establishing, on a permanent basis, the idea of One Only Living and True God. Let me, then, inquire, was ever a design more fully accomplished? — and does not the overruling hand of providence most signally manifest itself, in thus working the

who le after the counsel of the Divine Will? We return, then, with renewed confidence in the efficiency of the Divine Purposes, to a consideration of the more excellent system that succeeded.

As has already been remarked, this system is unlike the other in that it proposes to accomplish no temporary object, no limited end. Its purposes are broad and extensive as the universe. To reclaim man from iniquity, to recocile a world of sinners to God, and to elevate the entire human race to the rank and dignity and excellence of angels. This is the object and design of the system of redemption under which we live. For this was the Savior revealed, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, "to be a propitiation * * * for the sins of the whole world," to "draw all men unto him," and "not to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved." He proposes to reform man, to raise him up from his sinful state of misery and endow him with "glory, honor, and immortality," and to bring a world to rejoice in him as a Savior, and in God as the universal Father and Friend. This is the result which he gave himself to effect. As I have before shown, it is a consummation

desired of all benevolent minds. And if God was able to accomplish, so completely, as we have shown he did, the specific object of the first dispensation, why, it may be asked, may he not do the same with the more glorious dispensation of grace? Why may he not do all his will with regard to the redemption of man from sin? especially, when every man, who has the feelings of a man, would do it, had he the power. Why may there not be, at last, as striking a mnnifestation of his power, in overruling all things for the general and ultimate good of souls?

But we will leave these general considerations, and return to the text and the doctrine it inculcates. To the Scriptures, at last, all our reasoning must bow. And it is peculiarly gratifying to believers in God's unlimited grace, that the teachings of reason and those of the Scriptures so perfectly agree, that while reason says that a being of unlimited goodness would save all dependent upon him, his own word declares that he will save a world. Such is the obvious teaching of the text. "And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son, also, himself, be subject unto him that put all *things* under him, that God may be all in all."

Three distinct events are here evidently alluded to, each of which will deserve a separate consideration.

1. *All things* will be subdued to Christ. The phrase, “all things,” is of a kind frequently found in the Scriptures, having reference to intelligent beings only. All souls will be subdued to Christ. But what is to be the nature of this subjection? We are told that it will be a forced and unwilling subjection; a casting down to hell of those who do not voluntarily submit to his power; a confinement in chains of darkness forever, of a large portion of those he came to save. But is it so? I answer, if it is so of one, it is so of all. There are no exceptions made, no distinctions between different classes; but all, “all things” or all souls “shall be subdued;” so that to interpret it this way, would be proving too much, even the universal and ultimate misery of the race. No one would be disposed to go so far as this, yet there is no stopping short of it, if the text refers to the forced subjection of any.

Again, a different form of the same original word, translated subdued, is found three times in the text. The verse might be rendered, “And when all things shall be sub-

dued unto Christ, then shall the Son, also, himself, be subdued unto God, who did subdue all things unto Christ." Twice, the word is used to express the subjection of all things to Christ, and once, to denote the subjection of Christ to the Father. If, then, the subjection of all things to Christ is such as our brethren of another faith would have it, an unwilling and forced subjection, a confinement in unutterable misery and despair forever, it follows that the subjection of the Son to the Father is to be of the same nature, and that he must suffer a like doom as they; our Savior and all mankind are to be involved in one common, everlasting ruin!

need not speak of the absurdity of such a view, for no one contends for it. All are free to say, that the subjection of Christ to God is to be a willing one, it is to be the obedience, the surrendering up of his own will, of a Son to a Father. And it follows, as a matter of necessity, that the subjection of all to Christ is to be of the same kind, a willing one; that it is to be the obedience of disciples to a master; a subjection, not of slaves, but of followers; not in hell, but in heaven. It will be the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Psalmist, "Thy people

shall be willing in the day of thy power."

Once more. The supposition that the subjugation of all things to Christ and God, is to be an unwilling one is derogatory to the character of God's government. In effect it is to represent it to be destitute of efficiency and power, and saying that it does not extend to the minds of men. If such a view be correct, God is able only to oblige men to bow under the strength of his physical power, but he cannot subdue their minds; these will yet and forever be in rebellion against him; and it will be the subjection of crushed, yet still bitter enemies, and not of willing and loyal subjects. His power is to be exerted to its utmost in inflicting torment, without the power or ability to reconcile the offender. And we might, in that case, represent the finally lost, as using the language which Milton puts into the mouth of Satan, after placing him in a similar situation. Satan boasts,——

“All is not lost; the unconquerable will
And study of revenge, immortal hate,
And courage never to submit or yield,
And what is else not to be overcome;
That glory never shall his wrath or might
Extort from me.——

——Who overcomes
By force, hath overcome but half his foe.”

But we cannot believe that God's power is thus limited to the mere exercise of physical force. He rules as well in the empire of mind, and will subdue men's stubborn wills. It is his to exercise moral power. Through the mediation of his Son he will subdue a world, by reconciling it to himself. Jesus, by the mild influences of his love, "will draw all men unto him," and thus make them the willing and happy subjects of his kingdom. "At his name every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things in earth and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." It will be for God's glory, that all those created in his image and endowed with understanding through his inspiration, should become obedient to his will, and happy through the influences of the gospel. And this brings us

II. To a consideration of another event referred to in the text, as to follow immediately upon the accomplishment of the first; namely, the subjection of the Son to the Father. This is elsewhere spoken of as the delivering up of "the kingdom to God, even the Father," and to take place when the purposes of Christ's mission have been ful-

filled. It can be done only when the whole object for which he was commissioned has been completed, and the existence of sin in all its forms ended. The Captain of human salvation will not be subject to the deep mortification of returning his commission to him who gave it, with the acknowledgment that he has been partially defeated in his work, that the means employed were ineffectual, and that more than half, or that even a small portion of those he came to save, have resisted his power and are yet the subjects of sin. We would not "limit the Holy One of Israel" so much as to suppose that such a result can be contrary to his will; and we would not ascribe to him such a character as we must, should we say that he purposed any one of his creatures to the miseries of eternal rebellion. No! but we would, on the other hand say, and we say it with confidence, because it is supported by abundant evidence from Scripture, as well as by the teachings of reason, that Jesus will return from his mediatorial reign crowned with the laurels of victory. His triumph will be complete, and he will bring back a world of redeemed sinners and deliver them into his *Father's hands*, as the evidence that the

purposes of his mission are fulfilled. All souls having been morally subdued unto him, he will deliver up his entire kingdom to God even the Father. And then, as the old dispensation of Moses entirely accomplished its object, in the establishment of the truth, respecting the Oneness of God, so will that better dispensation of grace, have accomplished its purpose in the moral reformation of a world.

III. And then God will "BE ALL IN ALL." In one sense God is "all in all" even now. His creative energy is felt in all places and in all worlds. It propels the life-current through the veins of the minutest insect, and heaves up the mountain torrents of the sea. It fashions the beautiful mechanism of the tiniest flower, and regulates, with perfect harmony and order, the motions of worlds and systems of worlds. His spirit, which "moved upon the face of the waters," during the long primeval night preceding creation's birth, still upholds and sustains and vitalizes all things. Omnipotent, All-powerful and All-wise, "his works declare him and show forth his praise." The most insignificant creature that lives, is eloquent in lessons of his wisdom and love. Thus to the practised

eye, he is ever "all in all," calling forth responsive praises from the thinking and feeling heart. And he is "all in all" by that higher nature which he gave to man. By his "inspiration hath he given us understanding"—by his voice within us is he calling upon us to "walk in wisdom's ways and be at peace,"—and by the warnings and reproaches of conscience, is he urging us to "cease to do evil and learn to do well."

But in a far higher sense will God be "all in all," when his Son and all the world are subject to him at last. To the sincere Christian, God is ever all. He is, always, in all his thoughts. An ever abiding sense of the Infinite Presence is with him. His meditation of God is sweet—his faith in him unfailing—his trust, unbounded. Every thought and desire of his heart is to love his law and to do his will. To him "God is Love," and to love God with all his heart is the one great object of his life. What is true of one Christian, is true of all; and what is true of them now, will be equally true of every soul, when the period spoken of in the text shall arrive. Then God will be the all of every soul—he will be all to all, and "*all in all.*" He will be the only object

of desire to an infinity of beings. Adoration and praise shall fill all souls, and all the creatures he has made, shall worship him as the Universal Father.

We conclude then that the plain and obvious teaching of these words, is that of universal salvation from sin, and universal reconciliation to God. We think we see in them the prediction of the end of suffering and sorrow, and all the evils that produce them. We rejoice in the assurance thus given of the annihilation, the total and everlasting destruction of those base and clamoring passions which render earth a scene of wretchedness and misery — the doing away of envy, malice and selfishness — the end of rebellion and irreverence — and the universal reign of righteousness and peace. In that day there shall be no note of discord, no wail of anguish, no sighing of bitter disappointment, to disturb the general blessedness and joy. All will be calm, peaceful, serene. Rapt meditation, devotion and praise — these will be the employment of all souls, disenthralled, redeemed, and glorified. Wonderful efficacy of the gospel to perform all this, and out of all discordant materials, such as exist in the disturbed affairs of this world,

to bring universal order and harmony! This gospel is ours to prize, possess and profit by. We cannot value it too highly, or live too completely under its influence. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" — for the gift of his Son to die for us, and of his grace to save us. Thanks be to him for the hope he has set before us — a hope so satisfying in its nature and extent. "Eternity is too short to utter all the praise" due to him who has counted us worthy of so great and inexpressible blessings. Did we possess a thousand tongues, and were each capable of uttering seventy thousand voices, the vibration of all these through eternal ages, would not fill the measure of gratitude we owe to him who has thus purposed to confer upon universal man an infinity of happiness and glory. But let us ever remember that the most acceptable tribute of gratitude we can offer, is that of hearts and lives devoted to his service and conformed to his will — a tribute we can render, if we choose.

My brethren, what are all the anxieties, the trials and afflictions of this world, when set in opposition to this hope? They cannot rob us of it — they cannot quench it from our hearts. It rises above them all, assuring us,

that "these light afflictions of a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." What are all the persecutions, the calumnies and the hatred of little souls, to counterbalance the joys springing from a belief in this great salvation? Light are they when compared with those endured by the Savior; yet did they even exceed them, they would furnish no sufficient motive for us to abandon the only faith, which could enable us to endure affliction here in life. And what are all the blandishments of wealth, of rank and power, or all the gilded flatteries of fashion and favor, to turn one away from the enjoyment of such hopes? Poor, indeed, must be the exchange which those make, who forsake them from motives like these. They are purchasing the vain pleasures of earth at an exceeding costly rate, who barter away for them, the hope of heaven for themselves and the world.

And what motives can be urged, that are not here found to draw us to God and duty? His love so extended—the compassion of a Savior so strong—the good they are to confer on us so unspeakably great—we must have hearts of stone not to be moved by influences like these. If we listen not to them, we

fear it may be said of us with too much of truth, "neither should we be persuaded, though one should arise from the dead." Let it not be so with us; but rather let this grace of God, bringing salvation to all men, teach us to deny ourselves of ungodliness and every evil, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in this world, and thus be prepared for heaven here, and for heaven hereafter.

AMEN.

PRAYER.

O THOU God of all grace — Thou who didst lead Israel out of bondage and establish him in the land of promise, and who by thy Son hast promised to lead a world to Thee; we give Thee thanks for the exceeding excellence of Thy grace, and the glory of Thy purpose. We praise Thee for our lives, and the preservation of the same—for the provision Thou hast made for our temporal wants, and for that gospel which satisfies all the desires of our souls. Condescend, O Thou Most Merciful Father, to shine in upon our sinful hearts by the light of Thy grace. Illumine the

darkness of our minds. Uproot every evil passion contained in them. Create within us clean hearts, and renew a right spirit within us. Lead us, by the influences of Thy Spirit away from the deceitful paths of sin, and cause us to walk by the still waters of living pleasures. Prepare us for 'Thy service, and enable us to present our bodies and souls a living sacrifice on the altar of duty. Lift, we pray Thee, upon the whole world, the light of Thy countenance. Send thy word abroad through the earth, and let all the kingdoms of this world speedily become the kingdoms of Thy Son. And in Thine own good time, roll on that great and glorious era, when Jesus shall have subdued all creatures to himself—when he shall have put down all rule, all authority and power—and delivered the kingdom up to Thee, that God may be all in all; and to Thee, our Father, will we ascribe the glory and the praise forever,

AMEN,

SERMON XII.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST AN EXAMPLE AND A CONSOLA- TION TO HUMANITY.

BY REV. L. L. SADLER, PORTLAND.

JOHN, 11: 35,

"JESUS WEPT."

How exquisitely admirable is the sentiment of sympathy! How much of the divine it manifests! It breathes the spirit and temper of heaven. It is an emanation from the essence of the Holy One. How lovely is its exhibition in a world of suffering and sorrow! It goes out from self; and makes the ills and woes of others its own. It feasts itself with pleasurable satisfaction on the bliss of acquaintance; and lets fall the tear of com-

miseration on witnessing scenes of adversity and distress. It rejoices with the joyful; and laments with the grief-stricken and broken-hearted. It congratulates the fortunate and happy. In sympathy is found much of the charm and poetry of life. How cold and desolate would be the soul destitute of its favors and solicitudes! How dreary the scenes of earth unenlivened by its celestial influences! It is the vital element of sociality, friendship, and charity. Without it, the world would be a blank, and not an oasis to cheer the traveller, on his wearisome journey. With it, delightful scenes are beheld scattered over the fields of existence; and the soul revels in the gifts of an indulgent Providence. To be conscious of sharing none of the world's sympathy, is to be a stranger among acquaintance; and to feel the loneliness of solitude amid the social throng. This sentiment serves to fortify the mind against the most trying scenes and circumstances, to sustain the soul in life's darkest hour, inspire it with dauntless courage in the prospect of death, and nerve the heart with energy to execute purposes and achievements, amid the most direful opposition. How dispiriting the thought that there is no heart beating in

unison, no bosom to heave with emotions of gladness at the sound of success, nor sink at the cry of defeat, no heart to exult in prosperity and happiness, nor to sigh in adversity and misery, no soul to care for good or ill, weal or wo! How forbidding the thought, that life is disregarded by others; and that death will not be lamented. But oh! how welcome, how pleasing the idea, that a place is occupied in the affections of kindred spirits, that an anxiety is elsewhere felt in condition and circumstance, that fortune and destiny are made the subject of consideration to others!

The individual is likely to become dejected, forlorn, and broken-hearted, who is doomed to pass through severe trials unaccompanied with the consciousness of sympathy, and will feel but little resoluteness of purpose, when experiencing the ills and rows of fate. It requires a stout heart, a gigantic, godlike energy of soul, an uncommon self-sustaining principle, to preserve firmness and fortitude when treading the winepress of evil. But let an individual realize that he shares largely of sympathy, and his name, and all that appertains to him are regarded with deep felt solicitude—let

him be confident that others make his case measurably their own, and will rejoice in his joy, feel a pang of grief at the thought of his unhappiness, exult in his triumphs, and mourn over his fall; and he will go out into the world with more heroic courage, and battle with the storms of life with a more chivalrous, dauntless spirit. He will press forward in enterprise with a prouder, firmer, more determined step, and will bear up against the tide of adversity and wo with more majesty of soul, greater moral grandeur. The existence of this sentiment often renders the individual who is conscious of sharing its interests, more reconciled to ills endured, and more patient and submissive under the severer dispensations of Providence, more contented with a forbidding condition. It serves to buoy up the heart when overwhelmed with opposite forces; carries the soul aloft, above the storms of life, to bid defiance to the fatal shafts that menace destruction, and inspires it with unshrinking energy, and more than mortal bravery, when witnessing a martyr's fate. Oh how entrancing is its voice, as we pass over life's mazy track, whatever may betide us on our way! It is sweeter than the tones of the "Æolian

lyre, chaunted at summer evening hour."

Sympathy is the soul of the benevolent and more amiable virtues. Its influence is necessary to excite promptings to deeds of kindness and mercy. By its electric touch, the heart melts into pity at the sight of wo; and delights in the ministration of relief. The soul, destitute of this principle, would gaze on misery, unaffected and unmoved. The individual that is a stranger to this sentiment, will pass by the needy and suffering with stoical indifference, and filch away with relentless hand, the scanty pittance of the widow and the orphan. But he whose bosom glows with the feeling of sympathy, makes the condition of others his own, finds it a pleasure to befriend the unfortunate and oppressed, and considers it more blessed to give than to receive. The nobility, the dignity, the superior excellence of man, are manifest in those virtues that are intimately connected with the feelings of sympathy. The moral grandeur and godlike greatness of the soul are seen in those acts that have their stimulus in this divine sentiment. Human nature never looks so lovely, so elevated, so admirable, so glorious, as when illustrating its heartfelt solicitudes for the welfare of its

kind, by efforts to ameliorate condition, and prevent the occurrence of evil. Among the social institutions that have been established none are so creditable and honorable to humanity as those formed for purely benevolent purposes; and taking rise in that sympathy which commiserates want and suffering.

The Savior's mission contemplated as its leading object, the development and cultivation of the sympathies of the heart. He knew, if they were properly exercised, and were made to control mind and desire, it would become the pleasure of the soul to practically conform to the commandments of God. It is self-evident, that if sympathy excites such an interest in behalf of humanity, that self is measurably forgotten in the solicitude felt for others, and a sacrifice is willingly made to do them good, there is no danger of an encroachment on their rights to advance private interests, or of robbing them of what may justly be called their own, as their welfare seems to claim preference in consideration. Let an individual feel that sympathy for another which will make him regard his happiness as important as his own, and he will show by his deeds, that he *loves* his neighbor as he loves himself, and that

love never works ill to the object of its affection. Let this principle be thus fully exercised by the great body of humanity, and how soon would occasion of complaint for wrong, and injuries received, forever cease! What harmony, what friendship, what happiness would pervade all ranks of society! It is the design of the Saviour's mission to put into operation those agencies and instrumentalities, that shall eventually awaken such sympathy as shall make man the friend of man. This celestial excellence which Jesus sought to cultivate among men, was preeminently exemplified in his own character and life. It was with him the great stimulus of action. It was the presiding genius of his soul. By it the welfare of others took precedence of self. Every thing was sacrificed to the good of humanity. The angels are said to exercise such sympathy for mankind, that "they rejoice more over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance." The same solicitude for the well-being of our race, prompted the Savior to leave the bosom of the Father, and take upon himself the form of humanity, that he might raise a world to honour and glory. "Though he was rich,

yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might become rich." Nothing could exceed the interest he took in the well-being of man. Nothing could exceed the love he had for the world. His devotedness was unearthly, and gave evidence of a soul fully imbued with the spirit and temper of heaven. His regards passed the test of a fiery ordeal. His manifestation of affection was no vain, ostentatious pretension. It was an abiding, heartfelt interest, transcendently sublime, which time nor circumstance could not alienate—which character and conduct could not destroy. His love was the expression of supreme goodness, and the history of his eventful life, is a continued exhibition of benevolence. The welfare of others took such precedence of self, he never resented wrongs and injuries, nor sought to avenge himself for insults and indignities received. No anger ever kindled in his eye; no malice rankled in his heart; no frown mantled his brow; no vindictiveness pervaded his bosom. His spirit was the harmlessness of the dove, the gentleness of the lamb, the innocence of childhood. All was mildness, benignity, forbearance, kindness, and charity. When he was reviled, he re-

viled not back again; when he was persecuted, he suffered it. He returned not cursing for cursing, but contrariwise, blessing. "No greater love hath any man, than to lay down his life for his friends;" but the love of the Saviour prompted him to sacrifice his life in behalf of his foes.

An expression of the Saviour's remarkable tenderness and sympathy is found in the incident, with whose account, our text stands connected. It is a simple and touching story, unfolding to view the amiable qualities of him, who is made to us, a model of perfected excellence.

Lazarus, a devoted friend of Jesus, had died. The event was made known to him, while he was absent from the town where his friend had resided. The Savior understood his mission; and knowing that the work assigned him required the exercise of his miraculous power, for the comfort of bereaved friends, he immediately repaired to the endeared spot, where oft he had enjoyed sweet intercourse with the loved companion, numbered with the dead. Lazarus had two surviving sisters, Martha and Mary, members of the same household. Their hearts clung to the brother with the devoted fondness of

sisterly affection, heightened by the consideration that he was an inmate of the same family ; and one to whom they looked for protection and assistance. He seemed to be their earthly idol—the charm of life—the source and centre of temporal bliss. Deprived of his society and counsel, the world would be measurably a blank ; and the luxury of existence was lost. Long had they lived together in social harmony. Their interests were one ; and the happiness of each was indispensable to the happiness of the others. Their joys and pleasures were mutually divided. Oft had they held sweet communion together ; and felt the magic influence of fraternal sympathy steal over their senses, when the Saviour was present, revealing to their enraptured souls, the messages of heavenly grace. Household love had bound their hearts together, and long continued association had rendered the attachment doubly strong. And alas ! when Death made his unwelcome visit there, and severed those ties of affection ; when one so prized and loved was snatched away, and borne to the silent tomb ; when the place once occupied by a kindred spirit that gave to existence its chief interest, was made vacant, and the voice

once eloquent with the expressions of solicitude, was hushed in slumbering stillness, what gloom, what sadness, what desolation was there! Of how little worth seemed the world and all that it contained! Nature might smile with the loveliest fascinations and richest enchantments, and have no charms for them. The world might teem with pleasures, and only serve to aggravate their sufferings: Every thing around them might be as bright and beautiful as the cloudless, summer morning, and yet fail to cheer the drooping spirits. All seemeth to avail nothing, when bereft of that which is essential to give relish to blessings dispensed. Oh! what grief, what sorrow breaks on the soul, when friendship's ties are severed, and the society of loved ones, on which felicity depends, is broken up! How unpromising and forbidding the coming future! Could affection always retain the objects of endearment, and reciprocal attachments remain unchanged; could associations and solicitudes—the communings of love and harmonies once established, be forever continued; could prosperity and the ordinary blessings of Providence be perpetually enjoyed, there would be some propriety in desiring an exemption from

death. But of what value is life, when the objects of interest and regard are taken away; and the soul scathed by the hand of the spoiler, feels its desolation and its solitude!

“I would not live alway—I ask not to stay,
Where storm after storm rises dark o'er the way ;”
Where the flowers of hope all wither by blight,
And earth's dearest treasures are snatched from our sight;
Where life's sweetest joys are destroyed by a breath,
And the soul's fondest loves are buried in death.

Jesus approached the dwelling of the heart-stricken mourners, where friendship was shedding tears of commiseration with the disconsolate, and kindness was attempting to soothe the sorrow of afflicted sufferers. The weeping sisters heard that the Savior drew near. Oh ! who so welcome at this trying hour ! Who could share with them so fully the grief experienced, as he who had been to them as a brother ! Who could appreciate their condition so well, or exercise so much true sympathy as the one whose personal attachment would cause him to lament with them the loss sustained—and who had ever manifested such deep solicitude for the happiness of others, such acute sensibility, such comprehension of the human heart ! No sooner was it announced that the Savior was coming, than Martha went forth to meet him :

and as soon as she arrived where he was, she uttered, with her sighs of grief, the exclamation of confidence in his divine agency, and efficacious power—"if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee."

It is not certain that she intimated in this expression of trustfulness, that she had the most distant idea of his restoring her brother to life, or that she alluded to his capability of performing such a miracle. The remark she made when Jesus ordered the stone removed from the cave where Lazarus was entombed, concerning the commencement of corruption, is an evidence that she apprehended the season of recovery, even by the redeeming energy of the Savior, had passed. She might have indicated, that she felt assured, that any blessing he might ask God to bestow on the bleeding hearts of hapless mourners, would be granted, so that his own teachings would be verified in their case—"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted."

Our blessed Lord took occasion to pour into her lacerated bosom the rich consolations of gospel grace—and to chase away her anguish by tidings of salvation. "Thy

brother," says he, "shall rise again!" She had been educated to believe in a future state of existence, and she replied—"I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus then addressed her in regard to gospel faith, and the bliss it yields to its recipient. "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live!"

Oh! what precious words to be poured into the ear of the desponding soul! How replete with comfort and peace! They are the heavenly accents of promise to a soul overwhelmed with wo. They tell of joy yet in store for the spirit burthened with sorrow. And thou grief-stricken mourner! these messages of consolation are all thine own! "Whosoever liveth and believeth in Christ shall never die." The soul will always find sustaining power in him. But Jesus would speak a word of comfort to Mary, who had before so solicitously listened to his instructions to learn "the way, the truth, the life," and acquire the "one thing needful." And Martha was sent to ask her attendance. On approaching him, she exclaimed in sorrowful lamentation, with her eyes swimming in tears,

as did her sister—"Lord! if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died!"

The Savior saw her agony of soul. He knew that her heart was nigh ready to burst with grief. He saw her agitation and inexpressible woe. He beheld the friendly associates bemoaning with her the death of the loved and lost. The spectacle before him was one of suffering. As he gazed thereon, he heaved a deep drawn sigh. Then, as though reminded of former friendships and communings now no more—as though he would visit the spot where rested all that remained of one dear to his heart, and whose name he would embalm in his affections with fondest recollections, he inquired where he had been laid. On approaching the tomb, he gave vent to his feelings in a flood of tears.

But why wept the Saviour? Was it because he had lost a friend, and bemoaned his absence? So thought those that saw his expressions of sadness and sorrow; and they said to one another, "See how he loved him!" But could not he who preached consolation to others, stay his own grief? Could not he who hushed the plaints of distress, ease himself of the woe that hung so heavily

on his soul, or check the emotions of sadness that wrung the heart with agony?

But no! It was not his own loss that called forth the impulsive sigh, it was not his own bereavement that started the tear from his eye. He did not grieve for himself; thought rested on the condition of others. It was the expression of sympathy, of commisseration. It was not common for him to murmur or lament on account of his own afflictions. Though derided and persecuted, and subjected to the the world's reproach and scorn, though doomed to endure grievous trials, and to pass through the most forbidding scenes, he bore the shock with heroic courage, manly fortitude, and submissive patience. He was denied by a professed friend and disciple, and betrayed into the hands of his enemies by another. But he wept not. He seemed almost unaffected and unmoved by these acts of unfaithfulness and perfidy. Behold him again at the judgment hall, surrounded by his foes, and passing through the form of a mock trial, where he is condemned to death. There he is wholly deserted by his friends. None appear to vindicate his innocence, or sympathise with him in his unhappy condition. He is obliged to depend on his inward strength

to sustain him in this dark and doleful hour. But the dreadful scene does not disturb the tranquility of his soul. He submits to indignities offered in uncomplaining silence, and sits "like patience on a monument, smiling at grief." Then again, he is scourged, and mocked, and crowned with thorns, and taunted, and ridiculed ; but like the lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened he not his mouth. No wailings were heard on account of his sufferings, and barbarous treatment received. He yielded to the fiendish cruelty of ruthless violence without weakness, without agitation. Though unbefriended and alone in the day of evil, he seemed as calm and unruffled as the bosom of the tranquil lake. No manifestations of overwhelming sadness was there, but a serenity of expression played on his countenance, that indicated composure of soul, a mind at peace. He is taken to calvary to witness a martyr's doom, and to perfect the manifestation of his glory. There, scandalized by the world, he witnesses an ignominious fate. But the revilings and tortures of murderous foes did not overcome his firmness of spirit. It was there, he spoke the words of comfort, of peace, and of hope to his companions in death, and prayed for

forgiveness for his executioners. In that dreadful hour he seemed to think less of his own sufferings than of the unhappiness of others ; and when he saw the tears of sympathy fall from woman's eyes, he exclaimed, " Daughters of Jerusalem ! weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children ! "

This was characteristic of the son of God. Except in the garden of Gethseimane, and at the last hour of expiring nature, was he never known to suffer considerations of self to absorb solicitude, or create agitation. And then it soon gave way to the higher regard cherished for the welfare of humanity. He bowed his head submissively to the will of God, and paid the sacrifice essential to human happiness.

The felicity of others was ever the engrossing subject of interest with the Saviour of the world. When entering the city of Jerusalem amidst the shouts and Hosannas of the multitude, who presented him with the salutations, the respect, and the honors of royalty ; instead of being elated by the exciting scene witnessed, or pleased and flattered with the attentions bestowed, thought rested upon the fortune of that ill-fated people, and the tears of sadness flowed freely down his cheeks as

he contemplated the doom of that devoted city. So, when at the grave of Lazarus, the Saviour wept, not because of his own bereavement and personal sorrow, nor because he had not means to turn mourning into joy, and could not relieve the anguish of wounded hearts, whose condition he deplored, for he knew that by his magic power the sleeper would come forth from the chambers of death, to bless again sisters and friends with his presence and his smiles. But when he perceived the existing agony of soul experienced, though aware of the inexpressible happiness that would succeed, his truly sensitive feelings, touched with emotions of sympathy, became excited in behalf of the sufferers, and he could not restrain himself from tears. "Jesus wept!" How lovely and interesting he appears in such manifestations of sadness! There, is seen an expression of the goodness of his nature, the interest, the solicitude felt for the well being of others—there, is developed that sympathising humanity which prompted him to devote his life to the ministrations of kindness and mercy, and sacrifice personal interests on the altar of philanthropy; there, is manifest that divine sentiment which rendered him the friend of the friendless, the *comforter of the afflicted*, the companion of

the sorrowful, the minister of favor to the needy and distressed—there, is beheld that spirit of love, that forgave wrongs and injuries, and sought the amelioration of society, and the salvation of the world. The benevolence and compassion of the Son of God were universal. “He was the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of his person,” and like him he shew no respect to persons. The whole race shared an interest in his affections. His regards extended to every son and daughter of humanity. In the sacrifice of his life, he tasted death for every man, and afterward took his place at the right hand of God, to make intercession for all. All mourners may rest assured that the same sympathy which caused a Saviour’s tears to flow at the grave of Lazarus, is exercised in their behalf, and he who ministered consolation to the surviving sisters, though absent in the flesh, is ever present in the spirit of a Comforter—in the accents of his religion, to soothe and bless. Though he comes not to the heart stricken subject of bereavement now, to wipe away the tear of sorrow, by raising the dead to life again, and restoring the loved and lost to the arms of devoted affection, yet he comes in the voice of gospel grace, whispering words of peace.

assuring weeping friends, that every event of Providence is moulded in wisdom, and executed in love; that present afflictions are designed for future good; that to die is to go home; that the parting is not eternal; that he is the resurrection and the life; that the dead shall be made equal to the angels of God in heaven; that they shall be united with the departed in realms of immortal joy.

It will be thus seen, that it is no evidence of weakness, to drop the tear of commisseration at the afflictions and woes of others, but a token of a sensitive, sympathetic heart, that feels a lively solicitude for the welfare of kindred humanity. It is an indication of inward sentiments that develope themselves in the more amiable and generous virtues—an expression of qualities of soul that speak the divinity of man.

The more this spirit of sympathy and kindness is cultivated, the more pure and divine will aspiration be, and the more perfect motive and character. As the Savior, the exemplar of heavenly excellence let fall the tear of commisseration when witnessing the woes of others, may it ever be ours, to be so much like him, as to weep with those that weep.

PRAYER.

O THOU, who art the Author of all being and bliss! we have reason to be devoutly thankful for the high and gifted faculties with which we are endowed — for the sympathy and moral sense possessed — for that divine likeness in which we have been created, and in consequence of which, we are recognised as thine offspring. We have reason to be grateful to Thee, for that divine care and mindfulness, which guards our welfare, and makes provision for satisfying our returning wants. We have reason for rendering Thee thanksgiving and praise, for the favors and benefactions we are daily receiving from Thy munificent hand. But more especially have we reason for expressing to Thee the sincere gratitude of our hearts, for that grace which has secured life and immortal blessedness to a world of sinners.

Thou hast shown Thy regard for humanity in the arrangements of Providence — in the varied means adopted for improving our race — and in the early revelations made of Thy purposes and will — of man's duties and

interests. Thy goodness is beheld in the multiform phenomena of nature—in the outward economies of the world. But a richer display of thy benevolence and solicitude is beheld in the gift of Thy dear Son, whom Thou hast commissioned to complete the revelation of Thine adorable perfections—define human responsibilities and obligations—carry mankind forward in attainable excellence—and, finally raise the whole creation, that groaned in bondage waiting for redemption, to glory and bliss. Such a manifestation of love and mercy, calls for the highest notes of praise by angels sung. And shall man, the subject of infinite favor, be unmoved by the exhibition of that grace which makes him freely the heir of heaven? O Lord! “help our infirmities” that we may render Thee that tribute which is Thy due! It was in the spirit of Thine own divine mindfulness, that Thy Son, our Savior, voluntarily enlisted in the work of his mission; and in him we have in practical development, “the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person.” We desire to glorify Thy name for having communicated to him so fully Thine own excellence—and thereby rendered him the angel

of mercy and good will — the friend of the friendless to a wanting world. The deep sympathy he ever felt for suffering humanity: that pure, disinterested philanthropy which prompted him to bind up the broken hearted — to console the afflicted — to comfort the distressed — to bless the needy — to pour “the oil and the wine” of consolation into the lacerated bosom — to chase away the clouds of melancholy gloom, and throw a smile of hope over the countenance of despair, excites our admiration. And we pray, that the same spirit may be cultivated and cherished among mankind, that friendship and love, peace and harmony, humanity and charity may abound in society, and that the highest good of the world may be promoted. We praise Thy name, O God ! not only for this example of perfected excellence, but for that form of religion instituted by our Savior in Thy name, which contains an embodiment of all that is good in theory and valuable in practice ; and which is so highly calculated to assimilate its adherents to the character of its divine Author ; and render them merciful and humane, while it inspires with hope of bliss immortal. O, may this religion continue to be our stay and staff while life and being

last, that we may have a Comforter to cheer in life's darkest hour — a solace to soothe in bereavement and sorrow — a hand to sustain when earth and all its treasures fail — a source of joy and triumph when the taper of life is flickering in its socket, and the farewell sigh is heaved to the charms of the visible creation around ! O, may this religion have its renovating, salutary influence on our hearts and lives, so that our days may be the days of the righteous ; and our end peaceful, and calm as the waters of the tranquil lake, unruffle by the stirring breeze, so that we may be useful to the world, and leave behind us a name that will be worthy of being cherished in the fondest recollections of the virtuous and the good, speaking in silent but persuasive eloquence, that will tend to mould character into the image of gospel righteousness ! O, may this religion extend its influence far and wide, blessing the nations of the earth, till the whole world shall know and appreciate the Father's love, a Savior's sympathy, and the excellence of moral righteousness — till the present state is made an antepast of the celestial paradise — and all souls blessed of God, shall call Thee blessed evermore.

SERMON XII.

THE TRUE LIGHT.

BY REV. D. T. STEVENS, NEW GLOUCESTER.

JOHN, I : 9..

“THE TRUE LIGHT WHICH LIGHTETH EVERY MAN THAT COMETH INTO THE WORLD.”

THE Forerunner in introducing the history of Christ and his ministry, speaks of his religion as it existed in its own native beauty and spirituality, unconfined by time or circumstances; as one great essence of spiritual light and perfection; before creation dwelling in the mind of Omniscience, constituting a part of the Divinity, shining forth upon his works, and irradiating all intelligent life. He declares, that, in twilight glimmerings, it was always in the world, though not com-

prehended by the finite senses of benighted man; yet there it was, attracting the human mind upward to the worship of the great Original. Amongst the multiform inventions of men, and the conflicts of warring passions, this had still gleamed as the precursor of the rising sun of the gospel day, intimating some great, unchanging, almighty truth, yet concealed, to break, at some future day, in meridian glory, upon the world. Ancient sages and philosophers had been gently touched with its inspiration, and had uttered, imperfectly, some of its breathings; while prophets had not only felt its stirrings within them, but had been permitted, through opening vistas, to look forward into the future, when its better morning should arise, and to contemplate the coming of the Just One and the glory which should follow.

This bright morning at length, broke upon the world, when it could be said in the language of the poet,

“The race that long in darkness pined,
Have seen a glorious light;
The people dwell in day, who dwelt
In death surrounding night.
We hail thy rise, thou better Sun;
The gathering nations come,
Joyous, as when the reapers bear
The harvest treasures home.”

Then it was that the true light became embodied in Jesus Christ, the Sun of righteousness, who, ascending the moral heavens, commanded the darkness of the world to recede, and truth unmixed, all-radiant truth, to stand forth to the view of men, in its pristine glory and majesty. It was then that the rays of divine light became sufficiently condensed to give the human mind a clear vision of the great, the good, and the infinite, and to shed forth an invigorating warmth upon the seed of immortal virtue, confidence, hope, and joy in the soul. Then man arose to the proper sphere of man. Then began to spring into action those dormant principles and latent energies of the soul which are its crowning glory and dignity, which have since been gaining new accessions of strength and greatness, and have been urging the world onward in every ennobling principle of virtue, grace, and civilization.

The birth of the Savior, in whom was embodied every principle of divine perfection, the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of his person; the Immanuel, God with us, was the dawn of a new and glorious era to the world of mankind. It was the opening of a new and brighter scene

in the great drama of human affairs; the startling into being new and noble energies; the waking up of higher and more elevated hopes. It was the birth of salvation, and the dawn of immortality.

Well might its advent awaken joy through the realm, and cause the morning stars to sing together, and all the sons of God to shout for joy. Well might it cause the celestial messenger to hasten down the azure vault to announce the gladdening tidings; and seraphic songsters to burst forth in the lofty anthem of praise, "Glory to God in the highest." Eighteen hundred and forty-five years, according to common chronology, have rolled away since the Savior made his advent into the world. Since that time his light has been gradually rolling over the world, with its all-conquering and transforming influence.

The true light, then, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world is christianity. It is suitable that we pause and reflect for a little while on our obligations to almighty God for the invaluable boon of christianity. That we may justly appreciate this subject, let us first consider what christianity is; and secondly, what it has done, is doing, and is destined to do.

I. WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY ? It is the great luminary of the soul, so to speak. Human systems and inventions have afforded some apparent light to mankind, but it was not the true light, that which afforded a sure and unerring guide. It was the transient glare of phosphorescent light, cold and fading. But christianity is the *true* light, which, like the sun, *warms*, at the same time that it enlightens. It not only pours the light of truth upon the soul, but it warms and invigorates all its better sentiments into life. True and natural light has heat. The rays of our sun, while they illumine our otherwise darkened and dreary world, are, at the same time, accompanied by that warmth indispensable to life. So the true spiritual light, that which beams directly from the great fountain of infinite truth, is attended with the warmth of the celestial flame. Hence it is said, by the great spiritual Teacher, "And that life was the light of men."

Christianity not only reveals mighty truths, and causes the soul to grasp great ideas in its upward faith, but it causes it to feel the living presence of the Divinity. In other words, christianity consists not in faith alone, but in *part*, in feeling. Deep, ardent feeling at-

tends its faith. True, its faith is large, mighty, boundless; but in the magnitude of its operations, it is attended by corresponding feelings of itlimitable love, good will, and joy.

Its faith rises up and embraces the throne of God, as the seat of justice, goodness, mercy, and truth; the Infinite himself, as the loving Father of all intelligence, from whom, by whom, and to whom are all things. It sees his omnipotent arm outstretched to control every operation in his unbounded universe — exercising over all a general and particular providence, numbering the very hairs of the head, notwithstanding their minuteness, and seeming little importance, and noticing the fall of the little helpless sparrow. It is a faith which apprehends a boundless essence of universal good, operating throughout universal dominion, for the good of universal being, which sees all possible power united to infinite wisdom, diffused throughout every part of creation, from the least to the greatest, fulfilling the dictates of pure, unmixed, illimitable love.

Hence, it is a faith which points down the long stream of future time through all scenes of possible occurrences, gradation and change, and shows them all combining in the production of good, present, future, universal, end-

less good; because one great energy presides over the whole, and makes them bow to his sovereign sway, and ultimate in his infinitely benevolent designs. It is a faith which looks to the Savior, as the offspring of this boundless law, and its prime minister, ordained to execute its great purpose in harmonizing the moral world, a *means* to accomplish its grand design in universal happiness and perfection. In him, therefore, it sees all moral intelligences redeemed, and finally purified and saved; all things which pertain to the spiritual man, gathered together in one in Christ, both which are *now* on the earth, dwelling in the earthly tabernacles, and which are in heaven, *already gone* to the spirit land, even in him, that God ultimately in the diffusion of his loving spirit and everlasting favor, may be "ALL IN ALL."

At the same time that it contemplates all earthly things as perishing, and sees death and mourning extending their dominion over universal humanity, it looks away to the end of sorrow, and the extinction of death itself, when life, and beauty, and moral perfection shall come forth from the tomb. When—

"His own soft hand shall wipe the tears,
From every weeping eye,
And pains, and groans, and griefs, and fears,
And death itself shall die."

The grave and the winding sheet, and the weeds of wo, are transformed, by the sweet influence of this faith, to scenes of beauty and hope, and robes of light and glory, as it points to the resurrection from the power and dominion of death, to that bright world of immortality where they can die no more, but are equal unto the angels, *themselves* angels of light, the children of God. Yes, it kindles up in the human bosom a hope of a brighter and better existence, beyond the region and shadow of death, where

—“ What we now deplore,
Shall rise in full immortal prime,
And bloom to fade no more.”

Such is the faith of Christianity ; and it causes the soul to leap up in love and affection to God ; to approach him with confidence and delight, and to exclaim in all the fulness of triumphant rapture, “ whom have I in heaven but thee ? and what can I desire on earth beside thee ? ” It causes man to hope in the Supreme, and rest in him with the fullest confidence. It even delivers ~~those~~ who all their lifetime have been subject to bondage through fear of death, and enables them to feel that they can pass through the valley and shadow of death, and fear no evil, for God will be

with them there. It makes man feel that he belongs to a universal brotherhood. It warms the soul into universal benevolence and charity, making him who loves God, feel that he should love his brother also. It breathes into the soul a spirit of kindred, of sympathy, and of good will for all, making the possessor a philanthropist, a lover of mankind. It transforms the soul from the spirit of the world, the spirit of revenge, pride and ambition, to the spirit of its own illimitable benevolence. The recipients not only *believe* that God made of one blood all nations to dwell on the face of all the earth, but he *feels* it, and the great relationship resulting from it, the relation of brethren. And it produces in his bosom the spirit of universal equality.

It has a sanctifying and saving efficacy upon his heart. On the one hand, it saves him from that pride which would lead him to rate himself above others, and to say to them, stand by thyself, come not near me, for I am greater than thou; on the other, from that servile cringing spirit which would degrade him below, and make him a willing slave.

The pure spirit of christianity is not the spirit of a sect or party. It knows no party limits, or denominational distinctions. It is

a far higher and more noble spirit. It weds the soul to universal man; yea to God and to angels. While the world, untouched by christianity, may love those of their own sect or party, (even publicans love publicans) it remained for pure christianity to infuse into the mind a broader and more comprehensive philanthropy, a warmer and more tender charity; a charity not merely for friends and denominational favorites, but for all, even for enemies. It breathes a spirit which knows no vengeance. In the midst of angry contentions, and the warlike commotions of the world, it is as tranquil as heaven, and as peaceful as the unweaned child. The blind presumption of bigoted opposers, or the contemptuous conduct of despisers, or the open malice of deadly foes, could not excite within it a desire for retaliation. But it forbears and forgives to the last extremity. For enmity, it returns love; for curses, blessings; for hatred, kindness and good will; for contempt and persecution, prayers and good wishes. Thus it was exhibited in the life, ministry, and death of its illustrious Author and Expounder. When reviled, he reviled not again. When his uninformed disciples would call down fire from heaven to devour

those who treated them despitefully, he rebuked them, saying, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." They had not his spirit, the spirit of christianity ; but it was the spirit of the world, of sectarism, and revenge. He would have them forbear and forgive. So too, when the combined enmity of his foes was about to fall on his own spotless head, he could have prayed to the Father, and he would have sent more than twelve legions of angels to his rescue, yet he did not seek thus to be revenged. He knew what was in man, the darkness and blindness of the human mind, and he chose rather to forgive. Yes, and the inimitable prayer in their behalf, "Father forgive them," went up from his expiring lips, accompanied by the excuse for their conduct, "they know not what they do. Oh! what love was that! Jesus loved them notwithstanding their hearts were filled with the ranklings of bitterness towards him. Yes, Jesus loved man, irrespective of his religious faith or character; he loved him as the child of the Father, the offspring of the universal Parent. He loved all mankind, and he died for all, as the most incontestible proof of that love. He loved *the Jew*, but not because he was a Jew. He

loved the Gentile, but not simply as a Gentile. He loved the disciple, but not merely because he was a disciple, for he loved him before he was a disciple, and this love was the reason of his calling him to be a disciple. But he loved them all as members of one great family, equally near and dear to the great Father of all. No sect or party were sufficiently perfect to be peculiar favorites of the Savior. Had he found any in a state of moral perfection, he would probably have told them that they needed not his help. "He came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." The truth is, he came to save no party, but

THE WORLD.

Such is the spirit of christianity, as taught and illustrated by Jesus. Such was the spirit which he gave it, and such is the spirit which it possessers wherever found. It is not the spirit of sectarian Universalism, Calvanism, Arminianism, or any other *ism*. With sectarism of any kind, it has no fellowship. Its spirit is the spirit of universal benevolence, and its object, the diffusion of universal good. It is, in short, the mighty operation of illimitable love, overcoming hatred, and sin, and all antagonistical principles, by its own Omnipotent energy; a mighty spirit of reform, *regenerating man, and raising him from his*

degradation, towards the Infinite, to the boundless fields of light and perfection, breathing into the human soul the purity, and holiness, and love of Jesus Christ. Such is a brief outline of christianity, "the true light." We pass now, to enquire

- I. What has christianity done?
- II. What it is now doing? And
- III. What it is destined to do?

Upon these several topics we must be brief. We can, in so extended a field of inquiry, only present a few general ideas—take a general view. And

1. **WHAT HAS CHRISTIANITY DONE?** Although it has done but little in comparison with the grand achievements which it is destined to make, yet morally speaking, it has, to a great extent, made the wilderness and the solitary plain to be glad, and to rejoice and blossom as the rose. Notwithstanding the standard of christianity amongst its votaries is so much below that erected by its Author, and notwithstanding so small a portion of the inhabitants of the world have come under its direct influence, yet, there is no calculating the immense good which it has done in ameliorating the condition of mankind, *physically, socially, and morally.* We may

learn something of its achievements in this respect, if we carefully consider the condition of human society prior to the advent of the Savior, compared with what it is now; or if we will compare the condition of those nations which have not been blessed with the light of christianity, with christian nations at the present day, with all their vices. Read the history of the greatest, wisest, and best of nations before the christian era. Look at Persia, Egypt, Greece and Rome, in the days of their glory. What do we see to admire in their social and moral condition? Do we see there any agreeable picture of moral grandeur? Any thing that may be denominated true excellency? Alas! but little. No system of self-denial and moral culture and discipline, which would be calculated to expand the soul into great and godlike virtue, is presented to the mind; but we see that *inclination* and *ability* were the law of action. The highest principles of virtue which they knew, was that of overcoming great difficulties, and braving great dangers to gratify their inclinations, as ambition, or lust. Men were then good whose natural dispositions disposed them to goodness; when the circumstances under which they were placed were

such that no temptation to vice and sin fell in their way. They achieved great martial exploits, and gloried in their warlike prowess. But the christian can contemplate such a state of things only to mourn over it. To be sure, this characteristic gained them a reputation for greatness, but it was a greatness which consisted in the art of human butchery, and the power of producing wretchedness in the world. The blackest crimes were tolerated amongst them, and woman, the fairest part of God's creation, was degraded to a condition little better than abject slavery. But christianity condemned these evils, and aimed to correct them. It has succeeded, to a great extent, where its influence has been felt. Even where its faith is not acknowledged, it has been exerting its moral power, in some limited degrees, by means of that extended intercourse which has been kept up between the several great branches of the human family. And if any have reason to be thankful for the priceless boon of christianity, it is woman, so long trodden down and degraded by heathen notions and heathen customs. It has elevated her to her true sphere, the companion, and not the slave of man. No wonder that they have been the most ardent

worshipers at the shrine of christianity. No wonder that women have been first in their devotions—were last at the cross, and first at the sepulchre.

Look now at what we are as a nation; we that constitute this vast, happy, and growing republic. What raises us above the condition of ancient Greece and Rome? What has elevated us to our present enviable position amongst the nations of the earth? What gave birth to the noble sentiment which lies at the foundation of our national independence, and our republican institutions, viz. "That all men were born free and equal, and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, among which are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?" To all these questions but one answer can be given. It was christianity. Without christianity, that sentiment might still have slumbered on in obscurity. And without that sentiment, it is plain that our republic would never have been born into the family of nations.

But christianity has given us a country abounding in the most liberal institutions for the improvement of our race, for the advancement of the intellectual, social, and moral condition of man. It has peopled this land,

so recently a wilderness, with an enlightened, industrious, enterprising and christian race. Where the wigwam has stood, and the wild screams of the war song have resounded, it has reared their beautiful mansion, or the spacious temple of worship, with its spire pointing towards heaven, the home of earth's ransomed children, and sent up the notes of harmonious praise to the Almighty source of infinite goodness. Where all human knowledge was circumscribed to the use of the bow, the tomahawk, and the scalping knife, it has taught art and science to flourish ; founded free schools, academies, colleges, and universities, and diffused, far and wide, the blessings of light, truth, civilization, and a sublime religion.

Look for a moment over christendom, and see with what mighty success it has been attended in humanizing man. Let us see how it has smoothed down the rugged features of law and government, causing them to relax, in some measure, the iron grasp which they have held over the weak and the erring ; and with which they have crushed the oppressed heretofore. Christianity has abolished, to a great extent, in christian nations those cruel and barbarous penalties which have been at-

tached to certain degrees of crime, and clothed justice in the beautiful habiliments of clemency and mercy. Formerly, death was the penalty for almost all offences; now, in most christian governments, it is affixed to very few, and those only of the most flagrant and revolting character; and in many, it is entirely done away with, as a punishment for crime, as in some of the states of our confederacy.

It has abolished slavery almost universally through civilized governments leaving only a small vestige of its ancient barbarity and cruelty, to show to the world the mighty contrast between its own benign principles, and the rapacity and cruelty of unenlighted humanity. And I would wish, that, if this example were necessary to humble human pride by showing the depths of degradation to which the human race had fallen, our happy republic might not have been cursed with it; that it might, at least, have been driven into the twilight of heathenism, and not have been permitted to remain under the meridian sun of civilization, a foul spot upon the brightest page of civilized life. I pass, to enquire

II. WHAT IS CHRISTIANITY NOW DOING?
Are its operations now going on with a sweet

and healthful influence over the world ? I answer, yes. It is still doing marvellous things, whereof we have reason to be glad. It is sending out in every direction, streams of knowledge, civilization, and religious joy, hope, and charity. At this very moment, by myriads of voices, it is speaking directly to the hearts of untold millions, of God, of heaven, of immortality, of virtue, and duty ; and turning the desires and affections from the earthly channels up the heavenly way. It is causing man to understand his true interest, and the interest of his race. It is operating silently, effectually, and beneficially upon the great mass of human mind, softening, refining, purifying, and elevating it. And thus, in the great soul of humanity, it is concocting desire, purpose, energy, for mighty action in the world's behalf. It may be said to be ripening public sentiment, and feeling for some great exertion for the redemption of the yet benighted, crushed, and oppressed humanity." We see this tendency, this feeling, manifesting itself in the various plans in agitation for the improvement of man in temperance movements, in peace principles, the plan for a congress of nations, *in the* various efforts for the abolition of sla-

very, and for enlightening the benighted and heathen nations, &c. &c. All bespeak the operation of the great principle of christian benevolence, and love upon the public mind, and show that the spirit of the world's Savior is fast producing its own image in the hearts of his followers. It shows that like leaven, it is operating upon mind, regenerating it, and assimilating it to itself. Never was there a time, perhaps, when christianity was taking so deep and fast hold of the affections and better feelings of man, than the present; when its claims upon the heart's undivided homage was better understood; when the necessity of a religion of principle, of action, high, noble, godlike action, was so clearly seen, and deeply felt, in place of mere sound, passion, or profession. Never was there a time when the influence of christianity was so great in harmonizing the whole man, by drawing forth all the faculties into accordant and harmonious action, by showing that the God of nature has given no useless power or needless endowment, but that all, rightly directed, have a tendency to elevate and ennable humanity. Never was there a time, when christianity was affording so much aid to art and science as at the present; when

such harmony was discovered between natural and revealed religion, between the works and the word of the Creator. As long as natural science was supposed to stand opposed to revealed religion, the latter could make but little progress.

Nature's laws are seen to be matter of fact, and there must always be a degree of scepticism upon the mind in regard to a system, supposed to contradict them. But, at the present, christians are beginning to understand that the same God, "who at sundry times, and in divers places, spake in times past unto the father's, by the prophets," and who, "in these latter times, hath spoken unto us by his Son," is also speaking the same language, in his works ; that nature, rightly interpreted, speaks the same language, as far as it goes, as revelation ; and in no case, is contradictory to the living sentiment of inspiration. This view is having a tendency to liberalize the mind, and lead to inquiry, begetting a respect for the sciences, disclosing, even in them a living divinity, and thus, the mind is advancing onward towards the goal of truth.

Old prejudices and traditional notions, therefore, are giving way before the onward

march of christianity, and the scattered fragments of mind, which have been dispersed by conflicting doctrines, and antagonistical interests, are being attracted by its power towards one great centre, the fountain of truth and perfectness. Thus is christianity *now* at work, purifying the channels of human thought, modifying the institutions of human society, and cementing and strengthening the tie which binds humanity together. Thus it is at work, taming the wild, the savage, and the barbarian. Thus it is at work, pulling down thrones and powers of oppression, tyranny, and misrule. Thus it is at work, demolishing idol worship, and establishing in its stead the pure worship of the great I AM. Thus it is at work, modifying national codes, and civil laws, and moulding them more into accordance with its own benign spirit. Thus it is at work, in short, silently and effectually, upon the great mass of mind, thought, sentiment, and feeling; changing their direction, and causing them to flow out into the channels of purity, clemency, good will, and benevolent exertion.

III. WHAT IS IT DESTINED TO DO? It is destined to roll on and extend its conquests, until the earth is full of its glory. Christian-

ity is that stone which was cut out of the mountain without hands, and which is to roll and increase, until it becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. The Savior compared it to leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal, till the *whole* was leavened, indicating that its mission is to be crowned with the completest triumph. Its achievements are best seen in some of the results upon the condition of the world. We are assured, that, under its operation, all war, and warlike preparations and practices, shall be entirely done away. Every where, "swords shall be beaten into plough shares, and spears into pruning hooks, and nations shall learn war no more."

This will be a grand triumph of christianity, when it shall have entirely subdued the war spirit, and subjected the whole world to the reign of peace and kindness. What a sublime spectacle for angels to look upon and admire! to see all the inhabitants of this teraqueous globe, more than ten hundred millions of souls, of all nations, tongues, colors, and conditions, living together in the most perfect harmony and love! And yet, such is the victory to be achieved by christianity! **Such are its triumphs, which future ages are**

destined to reveal! Such is the scene which it is to unfold to the observation of an admiring universe. Said one while contemplating this interesting theme, "The loveliest scenes spread out before the eye in prophetic vision. We see nations, powerful in arts and arms, laying aside their implements of war; their jarring differences all settled; their drawn swords all returned to their scabbards; and they go back to their hills and vallies, their vines and fig trees; and beside the cool fountain, and the over-arching shade, and around the domestic altar, no longer visited by sudden and cruel alarms, they celebrate [the dominion of peace, and the triumphs of justice." Yes, there they all sit, earth's multitudinous children, under their own vine and fig tree, and there is none to molest and make them afraid.

Again, christianity, the true light, is to advance until the moral horizon shall become all radiant with its glowing beams— till the last vestige of darkness shall be driven from the human mind, till it shall kindle up the flame of truth in every heart. In the language of prophecy, "all shall be taught of God— all shall know the Lord, from the least even unto the greatest." The veil of unbelief

will then be removed from the heart of the blinded Jew ; the Pagan will learn to draw water from the wells of salvation, and bow humbly at the feet of prince Immanuel ; and the Mahometan will turn from the impostor to Jesus, as the prophet of the true God. Yes,

“ Arabia’s desert ranger,
To him shall bend the knee ;
The Ethiopian stranger
His glory come to see ;
With offerings of devotion,
Ships from the isles shall meet,
To pour the wealth of Ocean,
In tribute, at his feet.

Kings shall fall down before him,
And gold and incense bring ;
All nations shall adore him,
His praise, all people sing ;
For he shall have dominion
O’er river, sea, and shore,
Far as the eagle’s pinion,
Or dove’s light wing can soar.”

At that blissful period, the divine law will be written in every mind, and imprinted upon every heart, and from every soul, the incense of worship will spontaneously rise.

Finally, christianity is to exterminate all sin from humanity, subject the world to the reign of righteousness, and lift the human race to heaven—to God. Under its spreading influence sin will be finished, all hearts regenerated, everlasting righteousness brought in, and “God all in all.” Said the true light,

“I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” He was lifted up from the earth, and we may confidently expect, that, in the triumphs of truth, this promise will be fulfilled; that humanity universally, will be raised to the sublime height of moral purity and perfection which the immaculate Son of God occupies; to the same elevation of holiness and bliss; to the same loving embrace of the Infinite Father of mercies; the same immortal fruition; the same destiny of endless glory.

This is but a brief sketch of what christianity is to do. This is the mighty enterprise in which it is engaged—this the victory which it is to achieve. This is the enlarged prospect which cheers the hearts of its recipients, who partake of the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ. This is the sweet hope, the enrapturing anticipation of the soul, illuminated by the true Light. No wonder then, that he, whose eye has caught a view of this heavenly light, and whose heart has experienced its warming influence, should rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. No wonder that as it penetrates the heart of the aged, and causes it to beat with immortal aspirations, it leads him to *exclaim with devout joy, “Now letest thou*

thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before all people, a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." Then for the priceless boon of christianity, for its own intrinsic worth, for what it has done, is now doing, and is destined to do, let the devout gratitude of our every heart ascend to the Almighty Father of Light. To him, let us dedicate every power. Let no pains be spared to acquaint the world *now* with the excellencies of christian religion. Let us cherish it in our hearts, that we may ever feel to respond to the song of angels, "Glory to God in the highest," which is to be prolonged through the unnumbered ages of joy, blessedness, and praise.

AMEN.

PRAYER.

GREAT FATHER of lights with whom is no variableness or shadow of turning, as Thou hast commissioned the natural sun to illumine our otherwise benighted earth, so Thou hast given the Sun of Righteousness to enlighten the moral world. Thou hast caused Him to

arise upon us, with healing in his beams. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. And as the natural sun, in its successive circles, visits every part of the habitable world with its light and warmth, so the great Light of the moral world is to visit all conditions of benighted man, dispelling the darkness from his soul, and imparting light, life, and joy. To Thee, O God, the darkness and the light are both alike, but to our finite senses light is indispensable, and without the moral illumination afforded by the Sun of Righteousness, man could never rise to that state of glory and perfection for which he is constituted. Hence, that will be a glorious day to which we are now pointed by the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. At that time, we are assured, righteousness, joy, and universal good will shall prevail, human society be regenerated, and the grand doctrine of a universal brotherhood every where acknowledged.—More than this, our Father, the true Light, which Thou hast shed upon us, leads us to *anticipate even the time, when he will swal-*

low up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; when a ransomed world shall be made the recipients of a glorious immortality, and the loved and the lost shall meet to part no more. In these glorious prospects we rejoice, with joy unspeakable and full of glory. And for these soul-inspiring hopes, we would call upon all our powers to unite in an offering of praise to Thee, the Author of all blessedness. Help us to elevate our affections to the heavenly, and give our hearts to God. May we duly appreciate Thy spiritual gifts, so richly bestowed in Jesus Christ, and may we have grace to live according to his holy precepts. Help us sinners to repent of all our sins, and exemplify in our conduct, the kindness, benevolence, and charity of Jesus Christ our Saviour. Thus wilt Thou enable us to enjoy the guiding influence of the true Light through life, and in the last hour of dissolving nature, may we be sustained by its bright visions of immortality; may it take away the terror and sting of death, and enable the soul to launch away from the shores of mortality, leaning on the rod and staff of Almighty love, to the realms of endless beatitude; and Thine shall be the praise and glory, through Jesus Christ. AMEN.

SERMON XIV.

THE LIFE AFTER DEATH.

BY REV. W. A. DREW, AUGUSTA.

LUKE, XX: 37, 38.

“NOW THAT THE DEAD ARE RAISED, EVEN MOSES SHOWED AT THE BUSH, WHEN HE CALLED THE LORD, THE GOD OF ABRAHAM, AND THE GOD OF ISAAC, AND THE GOD OF JACOB. FOR HE IS NOT A GOD OF THE DEAD, BUT OF THE LIVING; FOR ALL LIVE UNTO HIM.”

WE live in a dying world, where changes are perpetual, and nothing is so certain as death. At the longest, life is comparatively short, and in a very little time these tongues will cease to speak, these lungs will cease to breathe, and these bodies will cease to move; for all that is mortal of us now, will be re-

posing in the quiet solitude of the grave ; and we, like those who have gone before us, and who are forgotten on the earth, shall be numbered with the dead. With this fact before us, the most thrilling question that can engage our attention here, is, “if a man die, shall he live again ?” In *our* faith, as disciples of Christ, this question is finally answered. We believe that man *shall* live again. A rejection of this doctrine would be the denial of the great essential principle of christianity ; it would be striking out the keystone of the arch in the temple of Christ. “For if there be no resurrection of the dead,” says Paul, “then is Christ not risen ; and if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching, (the preaching of the gospel) vain ; and your faith (the faith in christianity) is also vain.” So that, as professed christians, we do not need to be convinced of the *truth* of a *future life* beyond the grave. Nor do those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world—of the whole world—need to be convinced that *that* life is a *glorious* and *happy* existence—glorious and happy for all whom Jesus has redeemed from the power of sin and death. I shall not, therefore, in this discourse, direct an argument to *prove* the doctrine of a future,

happy existence after death, or to show that this re-existence will be the equal joy of all. I prefer, rather, to consider some circumstances connected with these great truths, concerning which the mind makes often and earnest inquiries, and an attempt to gratify which, may at least be innocent, if the conclusions to which we may come are *not* vitally essential. It is not, perhaps, altogether enough for us to know, in general terms, that there is to be a future life ; there are circumstances connected with that life which cannot but go far to diminish or enhance the present joys of our hope *in* that life. We cannot, if we would, and I do not know as we ought to if we could, suppress inquiries like the following: *when* is that life to begin? immediately after death, or not till the general resurrection at the last day? Are souls conscious still, though the body be dead, or is a reorganization and resurrection of the *body* necessary to the operations of the *thinking machine*? Will human beings hereafter *preserve their individuality*? or will they, like kindred drops, all mingle and be swallowed up in the ocean of divine love? If, maintaining distinct identities, will friends recognize in heaven, the lost friends of earth. and husbands

and wives, and fathers and mothers, and brothers and sisters, and kindred and friends be any more happy in the society of each other there, in consequence of the relations and friendships they had sustained in mortal life? We cannot, I say, if we would, suppress inquiries of this nature. Though we may not choose to make them matters of publicity, still, in the privacy of our own thoughts, when the heart within is agitated by the disturbed fountains of love for our friends that are taken from us, we must and we will indulge such inquiries, with strong and ardent desires for some satisfactory replies. We wish to know if their spirits are still conscious? if they are happy? or whether the sleep of death is utterly profound and dreamless, till the spell is broken by the voice of the trump of God, and the resurrection of the body? We wish to know whether we and our friends are to recognize each other in another world? and whether a peculiar love for the relations and friends of earth, may not be inconsistent with the *universal* love that shall bind us equally in holy friendship to all the blest of heaven? On these subjects, it is true, the Scriptures are not so clear, as they are in the direct and explicit proof of the

general doctrine of a future life, and, therefore, while we cannot deny the latter, and yet be christians, we may innocently indulge our opinions, according to the various shades of evidence that we can discern, in relation to the former, without forfeiting our christian faith or our christian fellowship, for each other.

As a general rule, I think we may safely believe THAT TO BE TRUE in the economy of God, which meets most amply, any BENEVOLENT DESIRES OF THE 'GODLIKE HEART'; and therefore I am slow to entertain any of those opinions, concerning the future state, as true, which do violence to any of the relations, any of the affections, or any of the generous, desires which God himself has ordained amongst his human children. If this is a safe RULE, as I believe it is, at least so far as any matters are concerned which may be called conjectural, and which are not amongst the essentials of christian belief; if, I say, it be safe to adopt those opinions of the future, as most likely to be *true*, which give the *greatest amount of happiness* in the *belief* of them, we may in the outset innocently repudiate those dark and forbidding conjectures which some have entertained, calculated to destroy all the relation

ships that had made life tolerable, and that identity without which there can be *no* conscious happiness. For my own part, I have examined the Scriptures some, and I have meditated not a little on the subject of man's destiny, and my conclusions are, that the soul of man is a child of the Immortal mind, and that therefore it partakes of a like immortality; that it can never die, or its existence be suspended, but that it will exist forever, with powers capable of improvement; and that, consequently, it is, and ever will be a progressive being, increasing eternally in knowledge, holiness and happiness; and that its quantum of happiness, *here* or *hereafter*, will always be in *exact proportion to the extent of its goodness*, or its likeness to the Deity—for this alone is goodness. I believe, therefore, that the consciousness of the soul and its susceptibility of knowledge and happiness, do *not* depend upon its connexion with “this prison of clay,” but rather that by being separated from it, as it is at death, it is capable of a more refined consciousness and bliss, being purely spiritual, and therefore less embarrassed.

I believe also, that men preserving their *individuality* and consciousness in another

life, will there see as they are seen and know as they are known; in other words, that friends will recognize each other in eternity, renew all desirable associations, and that a peculiar love for those in the first circle of affection, will not conflict with any of the duties and enjoyments involved in wider and more extensive circles; but that, beginning with self love, it will expand till it takes in the boundless family of God. Opinions like these, it seems to me, accord with such circumstances as must be necessarily connected with our ideas of the future life, in order to make that life desirable and a subject of hope. I think too, they are well sustained by reason, and a philosophy that is inspired by the breath of christianity; nor are they destitute of proof—sometimes quite definite, sometimes implied—in the teachings of the sacred writers. We cannot expect or demand that every thing should be explicitly taught in the Bible: for the most part, it deals in general truths, and leaves the mind to infer the rest from the nature of the case and from the goodness of God which abounds every where. These lesser truths, though not made the subject of special instruction, in the Bible, are yet as true, and may as cordially be em-

braced as those greater truths which are expressly taught, and to which the inferential ones are nearly, though subordinately, related. They are not to be looked upon as mere conjectures or speculations, that may or may not be true. Every thing is true, that can be reasonably inferred from the love of God; and nothing is or can be true, which is at variance with any of its demands.

I think our text throws much light upon the subject of the future state, and especially upon the question of the soul's consciousness and identity after the death of the body and before the resurrection treated of by Paul in his 1st epistle to the Corinthians. "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live unto him." Abraham had been dead more than three hundred years, when God appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and declared himself the God of that patriarch, and of Isaac and of Jacob. Christ, in our text, appeals to this fact, and denies that God is the God of the dead, in the sense that death is an eternal sleep, as the Sadducees held; but that he is the God of the living

only. But as he was and *is* the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, therefore those patriarchs were, and still are, *living*—living not in this, but in the spiritual world. And so he adds, “all [the dead] live unto God;” that is, all who die in the *flesh* are still *alive* in the spiritual world, as are Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. God *is* their God. They live now unto him. Hence it is true as Paul testified, “whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; *living* therefore or *dying*, we are still the Lord’s; for Christ is Lord both of the dead and the living;” that is, all souls, in *either* world, in time or in eternity live unto the Lord. Nothing can be clearer than the teaching of our Lord in the text. The design of his argument was to show, in opposition to the Sadducees, who denied a future life, that the dead *are* raised, or are made alive unto God as soon as they die. “Now that the dead *are* raised, even Moses showed;” not that they *may* or *will be* raised at some *future* time; but that they *are* raised, or are in the resurrection state, as fast as they die on earth. I shall not stop now to consider the Apostle Paul’s doctrine of a future, literal resurrection of the body, as described in the 15th of 1st

Corinthians. It is enough to say, that by the term resurrection as used in our Lord's time, and as probably used by himself, was meant a raising of the *soul* from the fallen body, at *death*; in other words, plainly a future life, renewed without cessation or interruption. The Sadducees, a small sect among the Jews, denied the existence of angels or spirits, or that there is any resurrection of human souls. To show the difficulty which an opposite [Christ's] doctrine would imply, viz: that as men die they renew their connections in the spiritual world, they came to Jesus and supposed a case. They supposed that a woman died and went to the spiritual world, having seven husbands, and they wished to know which one might rightfully claim her in that world. All this implies, that the doctrine of the resurrection, which was made the subject of inquiry by the Sadducees, and of instruction by our Lord, did not relate to the resurrection of the body, but to the immediate passage of the soul or spirit, at death, into another life. This is what is meant by "the resurrection" spoken of in our text. "Now that the dead are raised," said Jesus, God showed as long ago as when he told Moses, at the bush, that Abraham, Isaac, and

Jacob were still alive and with him, though their bodies had been dead hundreds of years. And such being the fact, as the dead are raised as fast as the bodies die, so He is the God of the living, only, for all live unto him; none die, in the sense of a termination or even suspension of the life of the soul; but this enters the spiritual world immediately. It seems to me this is the plain teaching of our Savior; and if he has taught it, of course it is true and beyond all controversy.

There are other passages of Scripture, you are aware, which go to the support of the same sentiment. At the transfiguration of Jesus, in presence of Peter, James, and John, we are told that Moses and Elias appeared. How could they appear unless their souls were yet alive and conscious? Moreover, when Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, and Moses, and Elias, and others are spoken of in the Scriptures, as yet living in the spiritual world, they are always mentioned as the *same* individuals that existed on the earth. Of course their individuality is preserved in the other world; personal identity is not destroyed; but men are the same beings *there, distinct, conscious, and capable of*

enjoyment, that they are here. I mention this by the way, in order to support the opinion I before avowed in favor of individuality and the preservation of personal identity, in the spiritual world, and as averse to that semi-Sadduceean theology which would obliterate all individuality and swallow up all human souls, as drops lost and merged in a common ocean. I can have but little sympathy for such a doctrine as this. It is annihilation in fact. For if you destroy personal identity, you annihilate the individual; and if the individual is annihilated there is an end of him, and so death is an eternal sleep.

Paul speaks of death as a glorious deliverance. "For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." What gain would there be in dying, if the soul is unconscious, and sleep thousands of years? Is there any thing in such a death, that it may be called a *gain* over the holy joys experienced by faith in Christ in this world? Even for him to *live*, was Christ, the best good that men could enjoy on earth; but to die was even a *gain* upon that.; it must, therefore, have been an immediate entrance into glory. He says, too, that he had a desire to "depart and be with Christ, which is better" than living here. By dying

then, he expected to be with Christ, not in an unconscious state, for that could not be *better* than life here made happy by the christian's faith. Our Lord assured the thief on his cross, that "to day shalt thou be with me in paradise;" that is, his spirit should enter paradise on that day, because on that day he was to die. The phrase so common, of being "gathered to the fathers," of "sleeping with their fathers," of going where deceased friends had gone, were all expressions designed to convey a belief in the continued existence of the *soul* though the *body died*.

I take it then, that the doctrine is true, as taught in various parts of the Old and New Testaments, that there is a spirit in man, which exists independently of the body, and which, indeed, can exist only for the *highest* purposes of existence, when separated from the body. I believe, too, that this spirit is still conscious, and preserves its individuality, as much as a prisoner would be conscious of his freedom, if the walls of his prison, against which he had beat himself in vain, should suddenly fall and be removed. I believe he is the same being afterwards as before, capable of loving more than he ever loved, and of *enjoying more than he ever enjoyed*.

There may be, to some minds, an apparent objection to the renewal in heaven of the broken connexion of earth, in the verses immediately preceding our text. The Sadducees had raised an objection to the doctrine of Jesus, by mentioning the case of a woman who had seven husbands, and they wished to know if former connexions *were* revived, whose wife she would be in the resurrection? Our text was a reply to this objection ; but before stating it, our Lord assured them that “they greatly *erred*, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God ; for it is in this world only, that men and women marry, and are given in marriage ; but they which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage, neither can they die any more ; for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.”

What are we to understand by this ? that the relation of husband and wife are to be dissolved by death. and that hereafter there is to be no peculiar enjoyment resulting from the reunion of friends in heaven ? If all the holy love that has existed between those *conjugally* united in life, is to be destroyed by *death*, then, too, must we conclude that every

other relation, such as father and child, brother and sister, &c., is to be dissolved, and souls go hence with *weaned personal affections forever!* If this be so, there is a sorry consolation for the afflicted as they stand over the corpses of their loved ones, to be assured that they are never, even in heaven, to recognise each other in the relation which had made their society on earth so sacred to each other, and the hope of a renewal of which, if permitted by God, *might* be the means of reconciling them to the present awful dispensation of his providence. For myself, I cannot think our Saviour intended to teach such a doctrine by his reply to the Sadducees. It is deserving of notice, that our Saviour did not tell the Sadducees that there could be no commingling of kindred spirits in the other world, no renewal of those virtuous affections that had been interrupted by death. He was replying only to a case under the Mosaic law, where, without much conjugal love it may be supposed, six brothers were successively obliged to marry the wife of their eldest brother deceased, to raise up children to transmit his name, and inherit his estate. *Such* marriages are not recognised in heaven, for there, no such motives of

conjugal union can exist. Being purely spiritual, like angels, they can die no more, and so of course, their marrying and giving in marriage are not necessary, by procreation, to supply for the losses which death occasions. It seems to me this was all which our Lord meant. He did not mean to deny the very doctrine to which the Sadducees objected, *viz* : that of a renewal of virtuous love. He did not acknowledge that their objection was fatal to this doctrine and thus give them up the argument. Neither reason nor Scripture authorize the opinion, that mere *legal* connexions, where love is not the binding principle, will be renewed in heaven; but reason and Scripture equally approve the idea that love on earth, whatever may be the relations to which it has given birth, will be perfected in heaven. And this is all which human hope could ask.

In this view of the subject, I see not why we need look upon death with so much terror. It is but the friendly hand that unlocks the prison, and sets the fettered soul free, in a world where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest. *Where* the spirit goes, to return to the God who gave it, we may not know. I agree with Pierpont, that

God is everywhere, and most where love is. This world is a star, and the spirit need not go to other stars to find God, for God is in this world as much as in any other. I have no objection to the idea of our New Church brethren, that this world, and all the beings that inhabit it, are but the *letter* of what also exists here in the spirit; and that, when the body dies, the soul also ceases its connexion with the natural world and finds the spirit of the world fitted to receive the spirit of the body. If so, it may be true, as a poet long since sung, —

“Millions of spiritual beings walk the earth,
Both when we wake and when we sleep.”

Who knows but the spirits of departed friends are the guardian angels that are always hovering over us for good, and are the “angels which do always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven?” We know not how this may be, but I am sure there might be consolation in the thought, as well as great help to virtue, if we realized that spiritual agents were about us, entering the very chambers of the soul, in close communion with our thoughts, and having a perfect knowledge of all our motives and all our actions. Of one thing we may be sure, Christ

is with us, by his spirit. "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world."—Though he has suffered death, yet he promised to come, and has come again, and presides over the moral and spiritual kingdom which he has erected in the world, and knows the thoughts of every heart, and the merits of every life. Let this consideration put us always on our guard, that we sin not against the laws of God, but that we strive in every possible way to approve ourselves to his holy Spirit, the comforter that is sent into the world, and which is ever ready to aid and comfort the sons of men.

AMEN.

PRAYER.

O THOU! who livest through all life, help us devoutly to thank Thee, that though death reigns in the earthly Adam, yet in the second Adam it is abolished; and that by his gospel he has clearly brought to light the doctrine of eternal life and immortality, for a redeemed world. Make us to praise Thee that this

life, which is but a moment, and less than a moment compared with eternity, is the beginning of an existence that shall never end. Teach us therefore, patience and resignation, amidst the brief disappointments and afflictions of this world. Give us love to Thee, and charity for all mankind ; that here we may serve Thee and help one another, and hereafter enjoy Thy glory, in the communion of beatified spirits, forever.

AMEN.

SERMON XV.

THE BENEVOLENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, DEFENDED IN A SCRIPTURAL EXPOSITION.

BY REV. G. W. QUINBY, SACO.

PROVERBS 1: 26.

“I, ALSO, WILL LAUGH AT YOUR CALAMITY, AND MOCK WHEN YOUR FEAR COMETH.”

To that mind which has faithfully investigated the claims of christianity upon the affections of the human heart, it is truly a matter of deep regret to behold the many gross absurdities with which it is loaded. The religion of Jesus, in its original purity, is full of beauty and simplicity; and being perfectly congenial with all the refined and tender and more sacred feelings and desires

of the soul, its beautiful doctrine, as it fell from the lips of the divine Master, dropped upon the heart like dew upon the tender herb, and the shower upon the grass. The preaching of Jesus was marked with no terrific denunciation—no heart-rending cruelties—no deep and subtle hatred—no heartless maledictions; but, on the contrary, in every act of his life, and in every great truth he inculcated, there shines out a tenderness, a sympathy and benevolence as beautiful and glorious as the sunbeams of a lovely morning. He beautifully unfolded the great doctrines of the universal Paternity of God, and the common brotherhood of man. He taught the world that he came not to *destroy*, but to *save*. He inculcated the God-like sentiment of forgiveness to enemies; and at last, when in the very agonies of death, upon the cross, fully demonstrated the fact, that his soul was filled with the very spirit of this sublime doctrine, by praying for the forgiveness of his murderer. And what was the direct tendency of these manifestations of love, and these divine teachings, upon the soul, but to chasten the affections—to soften the asperities of nature—to calm and subdue the tumultuous passions of the heart, and cause

the sincere believer to look up with confidence to heaven, and behold in his God a FATHER; to mingle in the great throng of human beings, moving upon the face of the earth, and behold in each man a BROTHER, bearing the same spiritual image of divinity, subject to the same trials and temptations with himself, and ultimately destined to the same glorious home in heaven.

Such is the doctrine of christianity as originally taught by Him "who spake as never man spake." So when Jesus travelled over the mountains and along the valleys of Judea, preaching the Gospel as he went, it is said "the common people heard him *gladly*;" and they that received the word and believed it, "rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Yes, Jesus was a friend to even poor publicans and sinners. He pitied their condition. He endeavored to alleviate their sufferings—to raise them up and bless them. His doctrine was adapted to their circumstances and satisfied their wants. And hence, when it was preached for the space of a few days in a certain city, it was said that, "*there was joy in all that city.*"

Such, I repeat, *was* and *is* the religion of Jesus, as it shines out [in the pages of the

New Testament. And, *as such*, how worthy—it is of a most sacred place in the hearts of all good men. *As such*, how cheerfully and ardently and sincerely can the believing christian recommend it to the attention of his fellow-man, and exhort him to examine its claims—embrace it with his whole soul—practice its beautiful spirit, and live up to its reasonable demands.

But alas! christian reader, “how has the gold become dim, and the most fine gold changed.” How different is christianity, as exhibited in the doctrines and the creeds of men, of the 19th century, from christianity as it appears in *the Gospel of Jesus*! Oh, come, take up those doctrines and those creeds, and examine their claims. Where now is the simplicity of Christ? Where his beautiful doctrines of forgiveness and charity? Where his heaven derived compassion, his tenderness and his deep and undying love for the sinful and the wretched? And where, too, do we discover that beautiful representation of the character of the Father, which gives to the religion of Christ its brightest charms; and without which, it possesses but little, yea, *nothing*, to recommend it to the warm affections of the human heart?

Where, I ask, are all these? "and echo answers *where?*" They are no where to be found in the creeds of men. We behold cruelty and revenge, and hatred and malignancy there, but we may search in vain for these bright and beautiful angels of mercy. Long since did they spread their golden wings, and with a mournful requiem, slowly and solemnly depart from beyond the pale of the christian church.

More than thirteen hundred years ago, the Pāpal church, in her unconquerable thirst for power, and to accomplish her ends, even at the sacrifice of thousands and millions of human victims, gradually denied the "love" and "simplicity" and "charity," for which the religion of Christ had been so justly valued, and instead of these introduced many of the most absurd and cruel doctrines of which the mind ~~can~~ possibly conceive. A general judgment, a purgatory, and an endless hell of fire and flames, peopled with devils and damned spirits, suffering tortures inconceivable ~~and~~ eternal,—these horrid dogmas were ~~first~~ taught by the Romish church, as the ~~fundamental~~ doctrines of christianity. The ~~Bible~~ ~~which~~ circulation amongst the people; and ~~was~~ ~~interpreted~~ by their spiritual teachers according

to the designs of the church. Mysterious rites and ceremonies were introduced, and, in short, every measure taken which art or ingenuity could devise, or hatred and cruelty invent, to make the religion of Christ an engine to inspire *fear* and *dread*.

An appeal to the *good* feelings and desires of the soul, in order to produce a repentance and reformation, was no longer regarded as *evangelical*. "We should love God, because he first loved us;" and "it is the love of God that leadeth to repentance," were sentiments which soon became entirely obsolete in the teachings of the professed heralds of the cross. Such doctrines were, indeed, so directly at war with the spirit of cruelty and revenge which was lurking around the very heart of the Papal church, that an exhibition of the beautiful simplicity and mercy of the Gospel would have put both church and pontiffs to an open shame. No, their designs were *cruel*; their schemes *ambitious*. And it was necessary to have a religion whose spirit and whose principles corresponded with dark and fearful operations of kings and potentates. And so God was represented as a most cruel tyrant, filled with revenge at the crimes of the wicked, and ever ready to con-

sign any miserable *heretic* to the dark regions of endless damnation. 'To do the will of the priests, was to do the will of *God*. And wo, wo ! to that unfortunate wretch who should presume to dictate to himself in matters of faith and **works**. And hence the most horrid, cruel and blasphemous execrations and anathemas were pronounced, by order of the church upon all such as should dare to think for themselves, and act for themselves, and worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences. Nor was this all; for thousands, and I might add perhaps in truth, that *millions* of good men and women were not only excommunicated from the church, but put to death in the most inhuman and bloody manner, simply for opinion's sake.

Thus were men ruled by *fear*, and made religious by *fear*. In short, the whole vast work of the church, during the age of which I am speaking, social, ecclesiastical and political, was a work founded in despotism, cruelty and revenge. And so completely had the mild and beautiful religion of Jesus been changed, that "the LAMB of God which taketh away the sin of the world had become a LION" that would tear in pieces and vor-

ciously devour millions and millions of God's own offspring. The FATHER of the universe had become a FIEND, and for the space of a thousand years during the dark ages, the mild and humane and tender spirit of the blessed Gospel was totally extinguished in the bosom of the visible church of the Redeemer. All was enshrouded in the dark gloom of terror. Fire and faggot universally prevailed, and the Pope and the See of Rome held unlimited sway over the minds of men.

The distinctive sentiment of an endless hell, and of an omnipotent Devil, was the great engine which moved all the ponderous machinery. Nothing could be effected without this. And to sustain *this* doctrine, all the texts of Scripture that contain a single threatening, of what nature soever, was tortured into an application to that subject, and if possible, made to sanction it. Thus it was through the dark ages. Thus it *has* been since the startling reformation under the celebrated LUTHER, 300 years ago; for though the infallibility of the Pope, and the supremacy of the church were denied, and strenuously opposed in the great revolution which was so boldly undertaken by this intrepid

man, yet all the *errors* which had been gathering around the heart of the church for centuries, remained untouched.

Christianity, for a long series of years, had been anything but christianity. It had become one living, moving mass of **ERROR**. A body corrupted in every limb! But the great leaders in the Reformation seemed to be unmindful of this fact. They acted with an eye single to the power and assumption of the Romish hierarchy. So that all the monstrous errors of the Catholic creed, as terrible and revolting as they are, are *now* discoverable in the creeds of almost all Protestant churches in christendom. There they stand, purporting to be part and parcel of the religion of Christ, but great engines of *fear* and *terror*. And the very same means are still in vogue to help them there; viz—*A misconstruction of the Revelation of God!*

For notwithstanding a brighter day has dawned upon the Religion of Jesus, and the spirit of inquiry is running from heart to heart, and men are everywhere abandoning the cruel spectres of Papal darkness, yet there are thousands and millions, even to this day, over whom the power of tradition, and early received impressions hold such unlimi-

ted sway, that superstition and false doctrine hold dominion over the great body of the church visible. These cruel, these revengeful doctrines are still *there*, and so long as they are there, the language of inspiration must be made to sustain them. And it *is* made to sustain them. But it is done, either through ignorance, or by willful misrepresentation. By quoting detached portions of the Bible, or by torturing and wresting passages from their legitimate meaning, and placing a construction upon them which bears no resemblance to the plain declaration of the text, when the whole passage is considered, and the general scope of the writer ascertained.

I come now to remark, that in all human probability, the text — “*I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh*” was quoted a thousand years ago, and applied by Romish priests, to God and the imagined horrors of eternity ; for the purpose of inspiring terror in the hearts of poor heretics.

And the very same passage is quoted at the present day, by all denominations of christians, with one or two exceptions, and for the very same purpose — viz. to inspire *fear* and *dread*.

The reader will bear witness to the truth

of this affirmation. For where is the man, woman or child who has not heard this text harped upon time and again, especially in seasons of great religious excitement? Where is the individual, who has not beheld the professed man of God on such occasions, arise from his seat, and with all the solemnity of which the mind can conceive, exclaim, as if from the great Jehovah Himself,

“I also will laugh at your calamity and mock when your fear cometh.” “Sinners, sinners, this will be the language of the Almighty God to the finally impenitent in the great day of His wrath. When the assembled world shall hear the sentence of the damned! Oh, pause, pause before you go beyond the reach of mercy! *Now* his Spirit calls, now it is knocking at the door of your hearts, and if ye refuse it will take its flight forever. Oh yes, and then you will be found upon the left hand, amongst the damned, and will soon take up your abode in hell; and there you may weep and wail and call on God for mercy; but it will all be in vain. God will then have lost all pity, and He will laugh at your calamity and mock at your fears and entreaties.”

— Oh how shockingly blasphemous is this

doctrine! How does it grate upon all the finer sensibilities of the soul! How void of loveliness, and how unworthy it is of a place in the good man's heart. Yea, with what a miserable grace can the believing christian recommend it to the attention of his fellow-man and exhort him to examine its claims, cherish it in his soul and practice its spirit!

And here then the query arises, is not this doctrine sustained by our text? To this question, we answer, emphatically, *No*. The text has no more reference to the future state, than it has to the moon. It speaks of no day of judgment — no pains and torments of Hell — no wrath of God ; and we have no right to affirm that the sacred writer *meant* this that or the other which he did not *say*.

Moreover, the language has no allusion to *God*. “*I will laugh at your calamity.*” This is not *God* who will laugh at the calamities and mock at the fears of His children: and I again repeat that it is shockingly blasphemous for any man to contend that it is.

Let the reader but reflect for a moment. Where is the man — where is the *christian*, the *parent* who could behold the torments and wretchedness of his own child, wasting over a slow fire — who could listen unmoved to his

piercing cries of distress, and pleadings for mercy? And what would be thought of the parent who could not only behold all this wretchedness unmoved, but could also stand and laugh at his sufferings, mock at his fears and entreaties, and glut his vengeance by feasting his eyes upon his tortures?

But what is all this to the miseries, and pains, and sufferings of the damned in hell. HELL! Oh what a place of ceaseless torments and unmitigating despair, if we are to believe those who have had confidence in its existence and attempted its description! Says Dr. JOSEPH TRAPP, an English divine:—

'Tis roomy, vast, and wide,
With store of fuel plentiously supplied;
The breath of God makes the full furnace boil;
And like a stream of brimstone fires the pile.
Doomed to live death, and never to expire
In floods and whirlwinds of tempestuous fire
The damned soul shall groan; fire of all kinds and forms,
In rain and hail, and hurricanes and storms;
Liquid and solid, livid, red and pall;
A flaming mountain here, and there a flaming vale.
* * * * *

All hell is fire — above, beside, below,
Fires, or in hard metallic substance glow,
Or spout in cataracts, or in rivers flow.

* * * * *

So says MILTON:

"A dungeon horrible on all sides round,
As one great furnace flamed,"

And CARDINAL FUGO repeats the same statement :

“Hell is a boundless and bottomless lake, full of incomparable heat, an intolerable stench, and innumerable pains ; there is darkness, there is no order, there is eternal horror”

ERASMUS FRANCISCUS also says that “Hell is an eternal prison, and at the same time a place of eternal execution to the prisoners ; *a sty of goats and swine* ; a flayers’ cart for dead spiritual dogs ; a carriion pit for all who go thither, like a brute without repentance.”

And the godly JEREMY TAYLOR once said with regard to the horrors of hell: “We are amazed to think of the inhumanity of Phalaris, who roasted men in his brazen bull ; but *this was joy in respect of that fire of hell* which penetrates the very entrails of the body, without consuming them.”

Such are the pains, and horrors, and inconceivable miseries of the damned in hell.

But mark, this wretchedness is to endure during the endless ages of ceaseless eternity.

“Think of the dread amount of human misery,” exclaims the Rev. AUSTIN DICKINSON, “that must be endured by an incorrigible

enemy of God, *increasing forever in guilt and remorse*. Think of the extent of eternity! Oh, send an angel forward in the awful deep, with the speed of lightning, for millions and millions of centuries, and the dread waves of perdition are still rising and rolling on beyond."

And says DR. GRIFFIN, "Let imagination stretch its wings again, and follow the excruciated soul through ages of unutterable endurance—through fires intense enough to melt down all the planets. One period after another passes by as it flies, until it looks back on the first million of years, as on a speck in the horizon, and still it hears the tormented soul exclaim, '*My agony is just begun!*' "

" How dismal it will be," says DR. EDWARDS, "when you are under these racking torments, to know assuredly, that you never, *never* shall be delivered from them; * * * * when, after you have worn out the ages of the sun, moon, and stars in your dolorous groans and lamentations, without rest, day or night, or one moment's ease, yet you shall have no hope of ever being delivered."

Oh what horrid cruelties! What infinite wretchedness! And yet it is said that God

Himself who created us, and in whose hands we exist, will Himself be the Author of all this *miser* and *despair*! Yea, not only so, but with the exultation of a hellish fiend, will even *laugh* in view of our terrible calamity, and mock at our groans and entreaties!

O, what a horrid, a shocking character does this sentiment ascribe to Him, whose nature is LOVE, “who is *good unto all, and whose tender mercies are over all his works.*” No wonder that infidels and skeptics abound in christian communities. For what man of the least glimmering of reason could look around upon the works of the great Architect of the universe, and behold his goodness and love beaming forth in every ray of sunshine, and manifested in every department of the universe, and still believe in the Bible as the revealed word of God, if it contains a doctrine so inconceivably cruel?

But this is not all. The sentiment under consideration enrobes our heavenly Father in a more malignant character than even this. It declares that in the great day of His *wrath* He will exult in the misery and wretchedness of his intelligent children, and mock their fears. “He will laugh in the day of His *wrath.*” Let the reader attentively reflect

for a moment on the idea conveyed in this language. It is said that Nero, the Roman tyrant, laughed over the torments of the christians whom he persecuted at Rome, eighteen hundred years ago. But no where is it recorded of even this inhuman monster, that "*he laughed in the day of his wrath.*" None but the most malignant can do this! A man may laugh when his anger abates, and his revenge has been satisfied, as in the case of Nero ; but to laugh in the very midst of a storm of madness, is to manifest a most diabolical spirit and disposition.

And this is the *spirit*, this the character which such orthodox men as the Revs. Edwards, Davis, Hawes, Lee and others ascribe to God when they use this passage (as they have done) in defence of the doctrine of endless hell torments.

And I would now appeal to the hearer, and ask—If this in reality is the true character of God, in what respect is He more *amiable* or *lovely* than the arch fiends of the heathen's Tartarus—or even the christian's devil—Old Be-el-ze-bub himself.

But one or two more thoughts before we come to a more particular examination of our text. And

1st—Does not Job say that *all* the paths of the Lord are *mercy*—And the Psalmist that “the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting”? But where is the *mercy* of God if the doctrine under consideration be true.

2d. “As I live” saith the Lord “I have *no pleasure* in the death of the wicked.” That is: no pleasure in their sufferings in consequence of a *moral* death. If, then, God has no pleasure in the sufferings of His creatures; if He feels to pity and deplores their condition, how is it possible that He can laugh at their sufferings and mock their fears and torments. Truly here is manifested a distinct contradiction.

But 3d. If it was *God*, of whom the wise man spake, in the language of my text, who would laugh at the calamities and mock at the fears of the wicked, then of a certainty, does this declaration bring retribution upon the great Jehovah Himself, according to the express affirmation of the author of my text, (Prov. 17: 5) where he declares that “whoever mocketh the poor despiseth his Maker; and he that is glad at calamity SHALL NOT BE UNPUNISHED.”

Now do the great mass of religious teach-

ers, contend that God will laugh at the calamity which He brings or will bring upon His creatures in another world? Most certainly. No one can dispute this. Then look at the dilemma which follows. Either God Himself must suffer the *punishment* attached to this offence, or his own positive declaration must remain unfulfilled. For He expressly declares that "He that is glad at calamity shall not go unpunished."

But there is one more consideration. The scriptures every where condemn *cruelty* in man. God speaks out in positive language to kings, to princes and all men in authority, and plainly instructs them in their duty with regard to this important subject. He tells them that they must rule with mildness and clemency, and must cultivate the kindly feelings of their natures. That they must not put forth their hands in wrath, nor judge men in the heat of passion, lest sudden calamity and unmerited suffering come upon their subjects.

The author of our text was very particular to inculcate this beautiful sentiment because of its importance; and he compares men of no pity or compassion to ravenous beasts of prey, thirsting for blood. And he lays it

down as one of the fundamental duties of man to "*love mercy*"—to show pity for those in distress—to dry up their tears, heal their afflictions, raise them up and do them good ; in a word to exert his every faculty to lessen the sufferings, sorrows and ills consequent upon our present state of being.

Now is it reasonable that God would thus instruct his children in the great and beautiful principles of moral goodness and virtue, and at the same time positively declare that He, Himself, would never be governed by those principles ; that He would never manifest the least show of pity or compassion for His dependent offspring who should die impenitent, but would consign them to pains unutterable and eternal, and then mock their screechings for mercy, and laugh and deride their terrible calamity.

Oh, how inconsistent and horrid do the falsehoods of human creeds, the prejudices of the world, and the bloated arrogance of designing men, make the great Parent of the universe appear !

Let every friend to the christianity of Christ arise, and assist in the glorious work of dispelling these dark and gloomy clouds which human wisdom has thrown around the

Religion of Christ, that the glorious sunshine of love and of truth may be let in upon the soul, and the Father and the Son, appear as they truely are, the Great, the Holy, the Glorious and altogether lovely !

We will now pass to notice briefly the true meaning of our text ; to do which we must advert to the context.

If the reader will take the trouble to turn to the chapter which contains our text (18th of Prov.) and read it carefully, he will see, at once, the drift of Solomon's instructions. He will discover that his whole object, not only in this chapter, but throughout the whole book was to "give good counsel" to the young and inexperienced, that they might walk in the way of life safely. That, to use his own words, they might have a light to lead them and a hand to guide them, that they stumble not. There are a few particulars connected with the teachings of the wise man, which it would be well to notice in this place.

I. In all his instructions he speaks with reference to the *present* and not the *future* world. At no time does he so express himself, with regard to either the virtues or vices of men, as that the reader can gather the idea clearly, that he even alluded to another state

of existence. And why should he, when “life and immortality” were not fully brought to light, till Jesus was crucified upon the cross.

II. Hence, all the *rewards* and *punishments* consequent upon virtue and *vice*, are confined by the Wise man to the present state. He spake plainly of the duties, the pleasures, joys, sorrows and sufferings of this world. He describes, in a masterly manner, the numerous sins and temptations to which human flesh is heir ; the sin of ingratitude and licentiousness, of drunkenness and dishonesty, of theft and robbery, &c. &c. These are all described together with their miserable fruits, in a manner at once so plain and energetic, that he who runs may read and understand, and thus be warned of approaching danger ; and so avoid the danger by avoiding the path which leads to it. But no where does he intimate that the punishment of our sins, or the reward of our virtues, follow us into another state. On the contrary, his language is : “The righteous shall be recompensed *in the earth*, much more the wicked and the sinner.” Indeed, there is no doctrine more plainly inculcated by him than this, viz ; that “virtue is its own rewarder, while vice is its own avenger.”

“ My son, forget not my law, but let thy heart keep my commandments.” Why ? To escape the pains of hell, and enjoy the bliss of Heaven? No! “ For length of days and long life and peace shall they add unto thee.” Again : let not mercy and truth forsake thee ; bind them about thy neck—write them upon the tablet of thine heart.” Why ? “ So shall thou find favor and good understanding in the sight of God and man.”

Once more. “ My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother.” “ For they shall be an ornament of grace upon thy head, and chains about thy neck. Discretion shall preserve thee, understanding shall keep thee, to deliver thee from the way of the evil man, * * * who rejoiceth to do evil, and delighteth in the frowardness of the wicked.”

I come now to remark that it was in warning young men from the snares of this very class of wicked and unprincipled men, that the words of our text were uttered. See verse 10th) “ My Son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not.” And here it would be well to remark that by “ *sinners*” we are to understand robbers and *murderers*, as the following verses show. “ If sinners entice thee consent thou not. If they say, come with us,

let us lay wait for blood; let us lurk privily for the innocent without cause; let us swallow them up alive as the grave, and whole as those that go down into the pit"—That is, let us lay wait in dark lanes and bye places in great cities, or in lonely spots on the great high way for the purpose of murdering and robbing the unwary traveller. "If they say come with us—let us swallow them up alive * * we shall find precious substance—we shall fill our houses with spoil. Cast in thy lot among us; let us all have one purse. If they thus entice thee my son, consent thou not;—and walk thou not in the way with them; refrain thy foot from their path; for their feet run to evil and make haste to shed blood." —

Here the wise man first describes the course pursued by a gang of miserable robbers and cut-throats to entice young men to join their ranks;—And 2dly, throws out a warning voice to all who are subjects of temptation, to beware of the snare laid for them. And how completely does this description, given so many centuries ago, of the laws which regulate the actions of robbers and murderers, answer to the same class of persons as they exist at the present time.

“Come with us”—join our party—cast in thy lot among us”—become a sworn brother and thou shalt have an equal share of the spoils; for we make but one purse. Let us murder as we go—“swallow them up alive,” for “dead men tell no tales.” And then seize upon their substance and fill our houses with the spoil.” We shall become exceeding rich, great and renowned.

All this is true to the letter, with respect to companies of robbers and gangs of pirates. They make one purse—they murder as they go, and they share equally in the spoils. But they are a most wretched and miserable class of human beings, because they are so sinful. God’s laws cannot be violated with impunity. The feet of such men, saith the wise man, “run to evil,”—“destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace have they not known.”

Hence the voice of warning to the young, in the context. “Walk not thou in the way with them; —refrain thy foot from their path.”

And hence too, Solomon calls upon all such as are in the paths of wickedness—as are engaged in the terrible work of murdering and robbing, to hearken to the voice of wis-

dom to repent of the cruel deeds — forsake so miserable a life and walk in accordance with the beautiful principles of righteousness that the inestimable blessings of peace and joy might be secured unto them.

This he does in the verses which immediately precede our text. Where he says, after having described the wretchedness of such ungodly men ; —

“ Wisdom crieth without — she uttereth her voice in the streets ; — she crieth in the chief places of concourse ; in the opening of the gates ; in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long ye simple ones will ye love simplicity ? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge ? Turn ye at my reproof : Behold I will pour out my spirit unto you. I will make known my words unto you.”

Here is the promise of wisdom to those who would be sufficiently wise to turn from their evil ways. They should listen to the words, and be dictated by the spirit of wisdom.

But there were some who would not repent — and thus escape the sure reward of their doings. And so wisdom continues, with regard to this class. “ Because I have called

and ye refused ; I have stretched out my hand and none regarded. But ye have set at nought my counsel and would (listen to) none of my reproof—I, also, will laugh at your calamity ; I will mock when your fear com-eth."

Here you will please notice that it is *not* God who will laugh at the calamities of those wicked persons here described ; but WISDOM. Wisdom is here personified and made to speak as an individual. A style of writing very common with Solomon.

I (wisdom) have stretched out my (wisdom's) hand and no man regarded it ; but ye have set at nought my (wisdom's) counsel and would none of my reproof. Therefore I (wisdom) will laugh at your calamity." Everywhere in the writings of Solomon, is wisdom made to speak and declare to the children of men—Saying if ye will not hearken to my admonitions and attend to my instructions, neither can I assist you in the day of your sorrows. And the whole world knows by experience something of the truth of this declaration. There is nothing more valuable than the teachings of Wisdom if we regard them so as to *prevent* our violating the laws of God and man. But after we have been

guilty of gross immoralities and crimes, and are lying under the condemnation of those laws, in what possible manner can wisdom impart assistance. If a man lies in prison has wisdom physical strength to release him? If he is condemned to death, can wisdom rescue him from his fate.

Says Dr. Adam Clarke, the Methodist commentator, on the sayings of wisdom to those who would not listen to its reproof. "These words appear to be spoken of the persons described in verses from 11th to 19th: (robbers murderers &c.) "who have refused to turn from their evil ways till arrested by the hand of justice; and here the wise man points out their deplorable state. They are now about to suffer according to the demands of the law, for their depredations. They now wish they had been guided by wisdom and had chosen the fear of the Lord; but it is too late; die they must, for their crimes are proved against them; and *justice* knows nothing of *mercy*."

This is what is signified by Solomon in the words which follow by the *fear* and *destruction* which should come as a whirlwind. "Then," (when about to suffer death) saith wisdom, "They shall call upon me, but I will not

348 SERMON BY REV. G. W. QUINBY.

answer; they will seek me early, but they will not find me. * * * They shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple (from wisdom) shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them.

But whoso hearkeneth unto me (in early life) shall dwell safely, and be quiet from fear of evil." —

Such are the instructions of Solomon with regard to the subject under consideration.

Reader, a word to you and I close.

You perceive that nothing is said in the context of either death, or judgment after death, or the pains and horrors of an endless hell. This, the celebrated biblical critic Dr. Clarke candidly acknowledges in his comments on this place. "Nor can any thing spoken here," says he, "be considered as applying or applicable to the *eternal* state of the persons in question; much less to the case of any man convinced of sin, who is crying to God for mercy."

Is this not a blessed consideration. That the believing christian can thus vindicate the character of his Heavenly Father, and rejoice in the goodness of his God. Oh, "let God be true but every man a liar!"

We perceive by the instruction of the context, the importance of living to God alone, and of being governed in all our intercourse with the world by the beautiful principles of righteousness and truth. Oh, let us turn into the blessed paths of wisdom. Let us cherish her lovely teachings in the soul, and be governed by her requisitions, and our feet will not stumble; we shall walk in the way safely, for she will neither laugh at our calamities, nor mock our fears, but will shed down the blessings of peace and joy upon our hearts.

AMEN.

PRAYER.

THOU Great and glorious Being whose name and whose nature is Love, wilt Thou permit Thine erring children to approach Thee in the attitude of prayer, and devoutly to hold communion with Thy spirit? We are not unmindful, Oh Lord, of our numerous imperfections — our constant proneness to

evil. We would acknowledge that we have done many things which are forbidden in Thy sacred Word, and left undone many things which we are commanded to do. But we confide in Thy goodness, for Thou hast taught us that Thou art love, and that Thy mercy endureth to all generations. Oh, wilt Thou then forgive our sins, and help our infirmities, that for the future we may, in a measure, avoid temptation, and practice those blessed virtues which become the true followers of the meek and lowly Savior.

Oh, our Father, we thank Thee for the revelation of Thy character which gives us strong consolation as we reflect upon Thy supreme government among the nations of the earth. We rejoice for the assurance that Thou art good unto all, and Thy tender mercies are over all Thy works. We rejoice for the assurance that Thy loving kindness endureth forever—and that thou wilt never leave nor forsake even the most sinful of Thy children, so that they may become the objects of Thy constant and eternal displeasure, but Thy promise is, that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." Indulgent Parent hasten forward that

blessed era, when Thy glorious character may be universally known and acknowledged, when Thou shalt appear, as Thou truly art, the chiefest among ten thousand, and the one altogether lovely. When cruelty shall cease to be associated with Thy nature—when the lion and the lamb shall lie down together, and the whole earth be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. Awaken in our hearts we pray Thee, a sense of our duty to Thee, and the blessed cause of pure and undefiled religion, that we may use our constant and unwearied energies in its behalf, and that the cause of God may prosper in our hands.

We would pray for our country and all the nations of the earth—that the Son of Righteousness may arise with healing in his beams, scatter the dark clouds of ignorance, bigotry, superstition and error, and light up the moral universe with a glory all its own—causing the poor and the rich and the down-trodden and the oppressed, and the mourning, and ALL who may exist in a state of sorrow and suffering, in this dark world, to rejoice with a joy unspeakable and full of glory; and unto Thee, through Him who loved us, and who

352 PRAYER BY REV. G. W. QUINBY.

gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works, would we render ascriptions of praise, and power, and glory forever.

AMEN.



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